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SAFETY NOTE: Always wear ear and eye protection when shooting firearms.
(Images shown are for marketing purposes only and are not intended as safe firearm handling examples.)

THIRD WEEK OF JULY

Springfield's XD series of semiauto pistols has received a lot of attention in recent years, but one of Springfield's bread and butter firearms over the years has been its M1A rifles. To be blunt, they simply can't make them fast enough, as riflemen still clamor for this classic semiauto rifle. Craig Boddington and James Tarr review the M1A Scout Squad, one of several new models for 2015, and it doesn't disappoint as it stacks up very favorably with other M1As.

Hornady reaches out to long-range riflemen with its new .338 Lapua factory loading, and then we move on to Tactical Training, where Kyle Lamb, who named this shooting drill El Pollo Diablo, gives Richard Nance a workout on the range. We close out this week's show with Gene Stoner's classic Classic III rifle—the Stoner 63.

FOURTH WEEK OF JULY

As AR rifles have risen in popularity in recent years, drop-in trigger systems have become more popular than ever—and you don't need to be a gunsmith! Ruger for the first time is offering drop-in triggers for two popular rifles in its lineup—the 10/22 semiauto .22 rimfire and its version of the centerfire AR platform—the SR556. In a matter of minutes you can drop-in either trigger systems, and you'll find the simplicity of the design impressive. No need to spend hours at the bench or studying gunsmithing books—and you get an improved trigger and at a cost that won't bust your budget.

Shooting through an automobile's windshield with a pistol is a potentially uneasy proposition, but in this week's Tactical Training session, our resident experts offer their experiences to help eliminate some of that uncertainty if in fact you're in a situation that requires it. Finally, we look at an accessory that will help you hone your shooting skills with the Glock pistol.

FIRST WEEK OF AUGUST

How is it 1911 pistols remain popular more than 100 years after John M. Browning introduced the design? One reason is the variety of 1911 pistols available, and Exhibit A in this week's show is SIGSauer's 1911 family of pistols. How can you not be impressed with the number of SIG's 1911 semiautos available (size, weight, finish, chambering, etc), and with the exceptional supply of factory ammunition offered by manufacturers, accuracy is typically better than you'd expect from a 10-decade old design. Thata's a win-win situation in our book.

We also take a look at Springfield's SOCOM, explore the benefits of a Half & Half drill, and check out the new lineup of products from Blackhawk.

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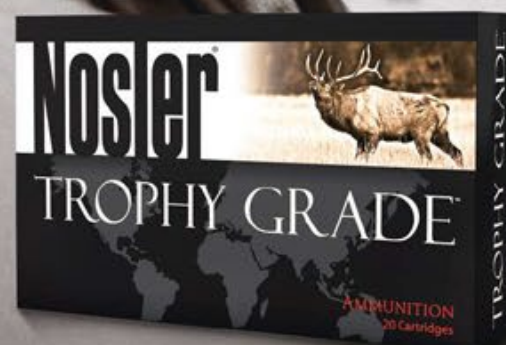
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Aging Gracefully?



**AMMO DOESN'T
LAST FOREVER.
HERE ARE SOME
THINGS TO BE ON
THE LOOKOUT FOR.**

by Layne Simpson

Hunters and shooters are hoarders of many things, not the least of which is ammunition, but how long can we expect it to last on the shelf. As general consensus has it, the smokeless powder and primers in modern ammunition are chemically stable for around 25 years after it is loaded—as long as the ammo is stored in a cool, dry environment. But ammunition has been known to last much longer. I have read that some of the .50 BMG used by American mechanized units in Opera-

tion Desert Storm was from World War II stock. If this is true, the ammunition could have been 50 years old.

I frequented gun shows in my area back before they became flea markets, and one guy who always had a table specialized in vintage ammunition for collectors. Most of it was quite expensive, but if a box showed wear or damage or had cartridges missing, prices were often affordable. I used to buy an occasional box, some of it dating back to the 1890s. Just for the fun of it I would shoot a few rounds from a broken box, and seldom did I experience a dud. There was the occasional hang-fire, probably caused by an age-weakened primer, but by and large the ammo shot quite well.

Sometime back I bought a Savage 99 in .22 High-Power which was introduced in that rifle around 1912. The ammo I had on hand was purchased from the gun show guy, and even though it was loaded during 1920s, it shot just fine in my rifle. In fact, it was more accurate than my handload with

the Hornady 70-grain bullet.

Am I advocating that everyone rush out and shoot ammunition made a century ago? Heavens, no. I did so under controlled conditions and confess to some of my past sins merely to illustrate the life and reliability of good ammunition. Prior to the introduction by Remington of the non-corrosive primer, the primers loaded in center-fire ammunition contained fulminate of mercury, so immediately after shooting my Savage, I pushed water-dampened cotton patches through its bore to remove the residue. I then coated the bore with oil for storage.

Before leaving the subject of fulminate of mercury, I should mention that while the use of primers containing it in commercial ammunition ended during the late 1920s, they continued to be loaded in military ammunition for many years thereafter. Several of the guys who are members of my gun club shoot vintage military rifles, and they use military ammo loaded in various countries as far back as the 1940s.

One even recently shot 1920s ammo in his Lee-Enfield, and you should see the stuff they shoot in their AKs. They also clean rifle bores with water prior to applying a rust preventative.

But there is more to the bad side of corrosive primers than their ability to cause rifle barrels to rust. During firing, the mercury amalgamates with the brass of the case, and this chemical attack not only initiates a gradual weakening of the case, it eventually makes it as brittle as a fresh potato chip.

The attack begins immediately upon firing and cannot be stopped by washing in water or any type of solvent. Water works as an effective solvent in a rifle barrel because it is made of steel and not brass. Once a case containing a corrosive primer is fired it should be discarded and not reloaded. I suppose it would be safe to reload for a while, but since no one seems to know exactly how long it takes for the case to become too weak to contain the pressures, tossing it is the wise thing to do.

During the early 1980s, I started shooting in handgun metallic silhouette matches, and when Thompson/Center introduced the 7mm TCU in its 10-inch Contender, I switched to it for Production class competition. The load I settled on consisted of the Remington 7-1/2 primer and 27.0 grains of H335 behind the Sierra 160-grain boattail bullet. I formed cases by necking up .223 Rem. brass, and since I shot thousands of rounds each year,

I used whatever I could come up with, including once-fired military surplus. I was aware of the use of corrosive primers in military ammunition but had assumed the practice had been discontinued prior to the adoption of the .223 by the U.S. Army in 1957.

I continued to load and shoot those cases for several years, and then, when

of those cartridges in my Contender, but my guess is it would not have been at all pleasant. I will continue shooting old ammunition as long as it looks good and appears to have been stored under favorable conditions, but you can bet good money I won't be reloading the cases.

And what are favorable storage con-

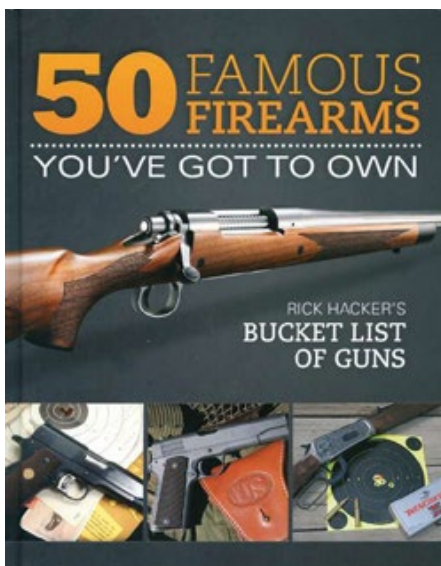
THE CASE OF EACH CARTRIDGE HAD BECOME SO WEAK AND BRITTLE IT LITERALLY BROKE IN TWO.

switching to a more lively game called IPSC, I hung up my single-shooter in 7mm TCU. A while back I dusted off the gun with plans to punch a bit of paper with it. I also discovered some ammo I had loaded for it during the good old days of shooting steel. As I attempted to pull a round from its 50-round plastic storage box, the end of the cartridge containing the bullet broke off at the shoulder. Same thing happened on the next round. And the next.

The case of each cartridge had become so weak and brittle it literally broke in two when stressed by its own weight. That was surprise enough, but the big one came when I noted every case was head-stamped "LC 84," which meant the cartridges were loaded at the U.S. Army's Lake City Arsenal in 1984. I have no idea what would have happened had I fired one

ditions for ammunition? Cool and dry for starters, which means in the trunk of your car during summer and down in a leaky basement at any time are out of the question. Excessive heat is bad, but I don't believe really cold temperatures hurt anything as long as the ammo is totally protected from entry of moisture. Some folks shrink-wrap ammo in plastic, and while I am sure it is effective, handling can puncture the film.

When all is said and done, I believe Uncle Sam's .30 and .50 caliber ammo cans will always be hard to beat as long as their rubber gaskets have not deteriorated. Good ones usually run around \$10. A friend of mine who continues to collect .223 ammo like a packrat recently paid just over \$20 each for cans made for 20mm ammunition. Each one holds more ammo than he can lift. ■



50 Famous Firearms You Should Own

Rick Hacker is a friend, so I can get away with saying this: "How could you leave off the Ithaca Model 37?!" All kidding aside, I'm sure there will be those who will quibble with his choices, but he's made it pretty difficult because every gun he has in this book can easily be defended as significant. I mean, if you include the Springfield Trapdoor Carbine, Winchester 1885 High Wall, M1 Garand, Mauser K98, Savage 99 and Ruger No. 1—and that's just a sampling of the rifles in the book—you're starting from a strong base. There's a wealth of handguns as well, and all are given a well-rounded treatment, complete with a full history (well, as full as you can be in a two- to four-page write-up), design notes, full-color photos and, in many cases, the author's personal experiences with the firearms in question. Regular readers of this magazine already know what an entertaining writer Rick is and how knowledgeable he is, particularly when it comes to firearms history. His book is a good read and a great reference as well. The book is available from Gun Digest (GUNDIGESTSTORE.COM) in either hardbound or ebook versions for \$30.—*J. Scott Rupp*

CARTRIDGE CLASH » Brad Fitzpatrick

.416 Rigby v .416 Rem. Mag.

The .416 Rigby made its debut in 1911. Capable of driving a 410-grain bullet at 2,370 fps and generating about 5,000 ft.-lbs. of muzzle energy, the Rigby was a bolt-action cartridge capable of double-rifle energies and a valuable tool for dangerous game. A few wildcat .416s followed, but it wasn't until the 1980s that a new production .416 appeared. Remington's .416 Rem. Mag. is based on its 8mm Rem. Mag. and doesn't require an enormous magnum action. It became relatively popular, but it hardly killed off the Rigby. Soon after the .416 Rem. Mag.'s debut, Ruger offered its M77 Magnum in .416 Rigby and Federal loaded Rigby ammo.

The Rigby's unbelted case is a hold-over from the days of cordite propellants, with a rim diameter of .590, a maximum overall length of 3.75 inches and a long, wide body with a significant taper and a relatively sharp, short shoulder. Modern factory loads hover around 2,400 fps and 5,115 ft.-lbs. with a 400-grain bullet, which combines a relatively flat trajectory and ample killing power. However, its big action translates to added heft—not always a bad thing when you're talking about a cartridge this powerful—and its large case also reduces magazine capacity versus the other .416s.

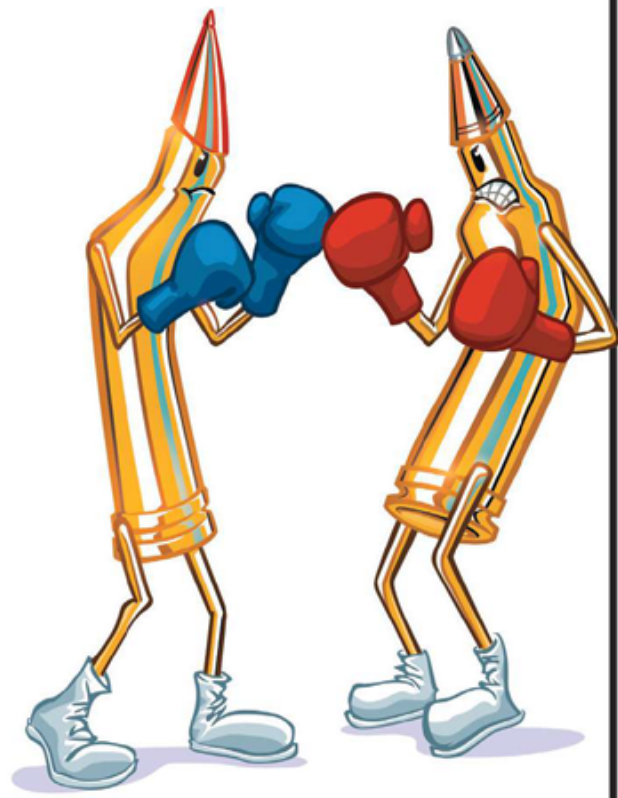
The .416 Rem. Mag. employs a smaller case with a .532-inch rim and a max overall length of 3.60 inches. That means a standard magnum bolt face and a smaller action with a higher capacity than the .416 Rigby. But the Remington's smaller case means it has to be loaded to higher pressures in order to reach the Rigby's performance level. This prompted some shooters and gun writers to theorize the higher pressures could cause extraction issues, but if there are any cases of extraction issues with Remington, I'm unaware of them.

On paper these two cartridges are, at least with factory loads, doppelgängers. They produce similar velocities and produce similar energies and recoil. Neither generates velocities that would challenge modern bullet design, and there are a number of excellent .416 projectile offerings from Nosler, Hornady, Barnes and others.

The real differences boil down to cost and case capacity. The Rigby's larger case has a capacity of 130 grains of water versus 107 for the .416 Rem. Mag. That's significantly more space and means reloaders can boost velocities and energies, but at a price in recoil—and the .416s are already at the upper recoil threshold for most shooters.

Ammo for the .416 Rem. Mag. is significantly less expensive than .416 Rigby, although availability in the U.S. seems to be about the same for both, with companies like Barnes, Federal, Hornady, Norma and Nosler all offering factory ammo for both cartridges.

Rifle options used to favor the .416 Rem. Mag., but CZ and Montana Rifle Company now offer relatively affordable Rigby-size actions, and there are still a few of the original Ruger M77 Magnums around. Remington offers its own .416 only in Custom Shop guns, but Kimber's Caprivi and Winchester's Model 70 Safari Express are chambered for the Rem. Mag. Most custom or semi-custom guns based on the Model 70 are likely to be chambered



for the .416 Rem. Mag. while Mauser-based actions are more likely to be chambered for .416 Rigby.

Professional hunter Jamy Traut in Namibia told me he thinks the .416 Rigby ammo is probably more available in Africa, although he says it's quite expensive. His preference? The .416 Rigby—citing both nostalgia and the fact that a friend of his stopped a charging Cape buffalo at six yards with a .416 Rigby a few years back, saving their bacon. That's a pretty compelling reason to remain loyal to a cartridge, although Jamy admits the result would likely have been the same with a .416 Rem. Mag.

.416 RIGBY

HITS

- Can outperform factory with handloads
- Rifles coming back on the scene
- More factory ammo now than ever before

MISSES

- Big case means big action, heavier gun
- Higher cost of factory ammo
- Hot handloads bring lots more recoil

.416 REM. MAG.

HITS

- Nearly matches Rigby but in a smaller case
- Cheaper ammo, less expensive rifle options
- Fits in "normal" magnum actions

MISSES

- Smaller case limits performance ceiling
- Lighter actions can mean more recoil
- Doesn't have the historical panache

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UP FRONT

0.730

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IT'S THEN THAT YOU WILL BELIEVE. THIS IS MORE THAN JUST A NUMBER.

THIS ONE HAS WEIGHT BEHIND IT.

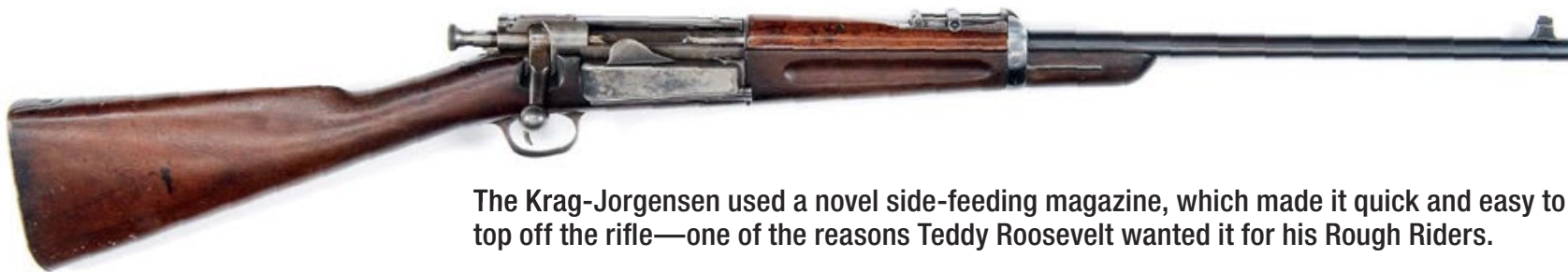


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RIFLES WEST » Rick Hacker

Krag-Jorgensen



The Krag-Jorgensen used a novel side-feeding magazine, which made it quick and easy to top off the rifle—one of the reasons Teddy Roosevelt wanted it for his Rough Riders.

Photo courtesy JAMES JULIA.COM

By the 1890s, although the wide open spaces were closing in, the West was still wild. Coupled with this was the Army's need to keep up with firearms technology, as its single-shot Trapdoors were becoming obsolete. With Indian wars still being fought and international conflicts brewing on the horizon, from 1890 to 1892 the Army conducted a series of trials involving more than 50 rifles to upgrade its arsenal.

The eventual winner turned out to be a bolt action invented by two Norwegians, Col. Øle Herman Johannes Krag, director of the Royal Manufac-

tory of Arms in Kongesdert, and gunsmith Erik Jörgensen. Their combined names, and the Krag-Jorgensen rifle and carbine they invented, would soon become familiar to hunters and lawmen throughout the West.

The Krag-Jorgensen was the first smokeless powder rifle to be adopted by the United States. Moreover, its .30-40 Krag cartridge turned out to be the first smokeless powder sporting round in America, superseding the .30-30 Win. by four years.

The Krag-Jorgensen featured a distinctive hinged magazine protruding from the right side of the receiver. The rifle was loaded by flipping open the

hinged cover and dropping cartridges into a spring-loaded carrier. This also made it possible to top off the five-round magazine before it was empty. That and its buttery smooth action made the Krag-Jorgensen a fast-firing repeater that brought it to the attention of Theodore Roosevelt, who insisted his Rough Riders be armed with it during the Spanish-American War.

In fact, the Krag-Jorgensen carbine shown here was used by Private Malcolm D. Lincoln, who enlisted in Roosevelt's 1st Volunteer Cavalry on June 25, 1898, in Santa Fe, New Mexico Territory. It was recently auctioned off by James D. Julia, Inc. for \$21,850.

NSSF's Range App

Whether you're traveling in unfamiliar country or sitting at home and wishing the range you usually use wasn't so far away, the National Shooting Sports Foundation may have just what you need: the "Where to Shoot" app. Available for Apple and Android, it's a handy (and free) way to connect with gun ranges wherever you may be.

I downloaded it for iPhone, tapped in my zip code and found not only my home range and secondary range but also a number of facilities I didn't know existed. The app lists NSSF member ranges, non-member ranges

and private clubs, and it provides the shooting details you want to know: indoor/outdoor, max yardages, guns accommodated, competitions hosted, public/private, instructional programs and other vital info.

The app also allows you to search an entire state. (A tip here: Make sure you have location services turned on or you won't get search results if you try to search by state—or with the "Find Near Me" feature.) You can view via a list or pinpoint on a map; it took six minutes to download Colorado's 172-range-pin map on a high-speed Wi-Fi connection. It's a lot faster to plug in the zip code you want, which



is easily Googled if you're away from home. You can also narrow your search via filters for rifle, handgun, shotgun, retail services and more.

It's a terrific app for any shooter, and if you're a range owner who wants to get in on the action, there's a handy link to input your info.—*J. Scott Rupp*



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NEW GEAR » J. Scott Rupp



POF USA Olde School

A direct-impingement .308, the Olde School offers barrel lengths in 14.5, 16.5 and 20 inches. They're nitride heat-treated and have deep flutes to keep weight manageable at around eight pounds. All controls are ambidextrous. It has a three-position gas block (normal, suppressed, off), and the bolt carrier group is nickel boron coated. Furniture includes an 11.5-inch M rail handguard, Magpul CTR stock and Magpul MOE grip. The rifle also boasts POF USA's E2 Dual Extraction chamber (see our May/June article on the ReVolt) and the company's drop-in trigger.

» \$2,690, POF-USA.COM



Hornady Lock-N-Load Neck Turn Tool

Turning necks is a pain in the, well, neck. This tool is designed to be powered by a drill for fast, easy operation. The adjustment mechanism has a tactile click-detent system with 0.0005-inch adjustments, and you can disable the detents if you want to really fine tune. Can be used on cases as long as 2.94 inches.

» \$146, HORNADY.COM

RCBS Pro Chucker 5 Progressive

Crank out tons of ammo with this five-station, automatic indexing press—the first five-station progressive that can be converted to seven-station operation. Switching loads is easy thanks to Quick Change die plate for fast caliber changes, and a powder measure with Quick Change metering components that allow you to drain powder without taking the measure off the press and make it easy to swap preset metering screws for the next powder. Die-cast aluminum frame.

» \$779, RCBS.COM



Steiner T5Xi

The T5Xi series features the Never Lost turret: After the first 120-click revolution, the mil indicators in the viewing window automatically change so you always know where you are. The line features 1-5x24, 3-15x50 and 5-25x56 models. The 1-5X is on a 30mm tube with the reticle in the second focal plane, and the other two are on 34mm tubes with reticles in the first plane. The 1-5X features the 3TR illuminated reticle, with center dot and stadia lines for targets out to 600 meters and calibrated for 5.56 or 7.62. The bigger scopes have the illuminated Special Competition Reticle, a clutter-free crosshair for long-range shooting. Fog-proof, waterproof and shockproof.

» \$1,610–\$2,300, STEINER-OPTICS.COM



Birchwood Casey Pregame Splattering Boar

This target has everything you want: photo-realistic presentation of a mature boar; highlighted vital zone; separate zeroing bullseye; and the “splatter” effect that allows you to easily see hits on target. Vital-zone hits splash fluorescent red while shots outside the vitals splash white. The target measures 16.5x24 inches. Cost is \$13 for a pack of three or \$3.40 each in multiples of 100.

» BIRCHWOODCASEY.COM



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Italian Flair

BERETTA'S ARX 100 IS A QUICK-CHANGE SEMI-AUTO WITH SOME COOL FEATURES.

As the rifle cycled, I could feel the bolt lock back, indicating I was empty.

With more rounds yet to fire in the drill my class was running, I immediately began to reload. I had to slow down and think while doing this. The handy carbine I was shooting wasn't a member of the AR or AK family or anything I was familiar with. Instead, it was an ARX 100 from Beretta—and a lil' bit different. Distinctive looking with a definite Italian edge to it, the ARX 100 is very much a child of the 21st century. As such, it has a number of interesting features.

The ARX 100 is a semiautomatic version of Beretta's ARX 160, which was originally developed for the Italian *Soldato Futuro* (Future Soldier) program. The ARX 100 is a modern gas-operated design that employs an adjustable short-stroke piston system and a carrier-controlled rotating bolt.

In its standard configuration, it is chambered for 5.56x45 NATO, feeds from common STANAG magazines and features a 16-inch barrel with a 1:7 twist. It's built on a "technopolymer" body and is fairly light but a bit chubby. While it has a list of impressive features, I was curious to see what it actually brings to the table compared to other recent designs.

To find out, I traveled to the Aca-



The ARX 100 allows you to quickly and easily change barrels and, therefore, calibers, and it's got some nifty shooter options, including the ability to change ejection to either side.

demi training facility in Moyock, North Carolina, where I had the chance to spend an afternoon on the range with the ARX 100. Perhaps the most interesting feature of Beretta's new rifle is its quick-change barrel. It truly is quick to change and requires no tools. The entire barrel assembly can be popped out in a matter of seconds, and replacing it is just as fast. You can swap from one barrel length to another, without tools, in less time than it took for me to type this sentence. Better yet, it also facilitates rapid caliber swaps.

What excited so many shooters about the Bushmaster ACR and then the FNH USA SCAR was the ability to quickly swap both barrels and calibers. Unfortunately, after years of waiting, neither company has offered the spare barrels and caliber conversions customers expected. Currently, Beretta plans to offer different length 5.56x45 barrels as well as conversions to other calibers such as 7.62x39, .300 BLK and 6.8mm SPC. The 7.62x39 conversion is noteworthy as it feeds from standard Com Bloc Kalashnikov magazines. So the quick-change barrel feature will be handy if Beretta does offer barrels and caliber conversion kits as accessories.

The ARX 100 also takes ambidextrous controls to a new level. Not only does it have ambidextrous safeties, magazine releases and bolt releases, but the reciprocating charging handle can easily be rotated from side to side—in seconds, without the use of tools. You simply pull it out a click, rotate it through the ejection port to the opposite side and snap it back into place.

But what really sets the ARX 100 apart from the crowd is the ease with which you can also change the ejection from right to left and back again. The bolt features extractors on the right and left side. You select one by simply inserting a bullet (or other pointy object) into a hole in the rear of the receiver and pushing. The rifle will now eject to whichever side you choose; nothing else is required.

As you would expect from a modern sporting rifle, the ARX 100 features a full-length 1913 rail at 12 o'clock—enabling quick and trouble-free optics mounting—and also sports folding polymer sights, which provide adjustment out to 600 meters. The rifle also has short rails at three, six and nine o'clock for white lights and other accessories.

Four web sling slots are provided

for attaching a sling. To reduce overall length, the stock folds neatly to the side, which is a nice touch. The stock can also be extended/collapsed with 2.6 inches of adjustment.

At seven pounds empty and without optic, it's fairly light and handy. It's also a compact 35.7 inches in length. The center of the rifle is a bit chubby, as I mentioned, and has a feel all its own.

Magazines insert easily but take a push to lock in place (be sure to give a good push/pull when changing mags). The charging handle is easy to reach and manipulate, and rounds feed smoothly into the chamber.

I found the safety a bit of a reach, and I had to give it a good push to snap it to Fire. The single-stage trigger breaks at 5.5 pounds and is quite usable. Recoil impulse is mild and easy to control, and ejection is enthusiastic. The bolt locks back on your last shot, and magazines eject cleanly with the push of a button. The gun is also easy to strip for cleaning.

My experience at Academi didn't include formal accuracy testing of the rifle, but I found it to shoot acceptably well with groups running 1.5 to 2.5 m.o.a. with most standard loads.

But nothing's perfect. If you are six feet tall or taller, you will likely find the length of pull a bit short. The stock comb is low, and thus your cheek weld with optics is less than ideal. I also wish the magazine releases were a bit bigger and the safety placed a mite lower. Further, my first demo rifle did not run flawlessly, and I swapped to a different one during the class.

All in all, though, the ARX 100 is an

interesting step for Beretta. It's a modern rifle with a lot of features, and it appears well designed. Better still, it seems Beretta learned from Bushmaster's and FNH USA's mistakes when it comes to the U.S. commercial market. Beretta plans to support the ARX 100 with desirable accessories, and it has priced the rifle within reach of many shooters. The suggested retail is \$1,950, but the current street price is substantially less. I look forward to seeing how the ARX 100, its accessories and aftermarket parts fare in the years ahead. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

BERETTA ARX 100

TYPE	short-stroke gas piston semiauto w/carrier-controlled rotating bolt
CALIBER	5.56x45
CAPACITY	feeds from STANAG detachable box magazines
BARREL	16 in. cold hammer forged, chrome lined, 1:7 twist
FINISH	manganese phosphate
OVERALL LENGTH	35.7 in.
WEIGHT	7 lb. w/o magazine
TRIGGER	single-stage, 5.5 lb. pull
SIGHTS	folding protected post front, folding rotating aperture rear; integral optics rail
STOCK	collapsible and side-folding
PRICE	\$1,950
MANUFACTURER	Beretta, BERETTAUSA.COM



The rifle has a polymer chassis, which makes it light, although it has a bit of a chubby feel to it. Handling was good, and accuracy, while not formally tested, was decent.

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Fast-Lane Lubes

SPRAY-ON CASE LUBES ARE SO QUICK AND EFFECTIVE THAT ROLL PADS COULD BE A THING OF THE PAST.

Spray-on case sizing lubricants save bulk loaders a lot of time and offer advantages worth considering for small-batch loaders, too. Frankly, I think good spray-on lubes have made roll pads all but obsolete.

The most significant advantage of spray-on lubes is, of course, the time they save. Rather than lining up eight or 10 cases at a time for a roll across the lube pad, just line them all up on a sheet of cardboard or some other surface that you don't mind making greasy and give them a quick spritz. Allow the lube a minute or two to spread, then roll 'em and spray the other side. You can lube a lot of cases in short order.

Most spray-on lubes have an alcohol-based carrier or some other fast-drying agent. Give the sprayed cases a couple of minutes to allow the carrier to vaporize and then commence to sizing the cases.

Another advantage of spray-on lubing is that you evenly coat the neck and shoulder—portions typically difficult to lube with a roll pad—along with the body of the case.

Although some reloaders promote lightly lubing the inside of case mouths,



Spray-on lubes really save time, and Hornady's One Shot goes a step further in that it doesn't need to be wiped from cases before sizing, eliminating a time-consuming chore.

I'm in the opposite camp. I don't like the thought of inconsistent amounts of lube holding bullets with varying tension or of migrating lubes potentially "killing" some of the propellant. However, if you want your inside necks lubed, spray-on lubes can facilitate that, too. Instead of spraying the laid-out cases from the base end, as I do, spray them from the forward end, which allows just a little of the lube mist to enter the case mouths.

Most of today's spray-on lubes work well. The following is not a comprehensive list, but here's a look at the characteristics and advantages of three spray-on lubes I have extensive personal experience with and have found particularly useful.

Hornady One Shot

One Shot differs from the others detailed here. It's a dry lube. Carried in a fast-drying liquid agent, it is a non-

petroleum lube that does not contaminate primers or propellant and does not need to be wiped off after sizing—a significant advantage in the minds of many shooters. Unlike with the other two lubes, I don't worry about traces of One Shot entering the mouths of my cases, so I don't take the time to line the cases all up in rows and angle the spray from the base ends—I just dump the cases in a shallow cardboard tray and hose 'em down.

In my experience it does not offer quite the slickness and effortless sizing as the other two lubes, but for easy-to-size cases, it's the simplest of the three to apply and doesn't require cleanup. And if lubed cases seem a bit hard to size, that's easily solved with another blast of One Shot. It also contains DynaGlide Plus, an agent touted to prevent case tarnish and improve ejection. I use this on almost all handgun cases and



.223 REM.

MODELS: M-223
P-223

.22 LONG RIFLE

MODEL: P-RIMFIRE

.300 BLACKOUT

MODELS: M-300 BLK
P-300 BLK

.308 WIN.

MODELS: M-308
P-308

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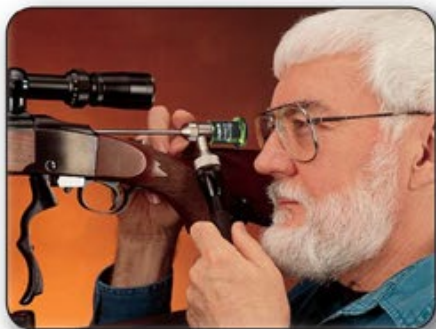
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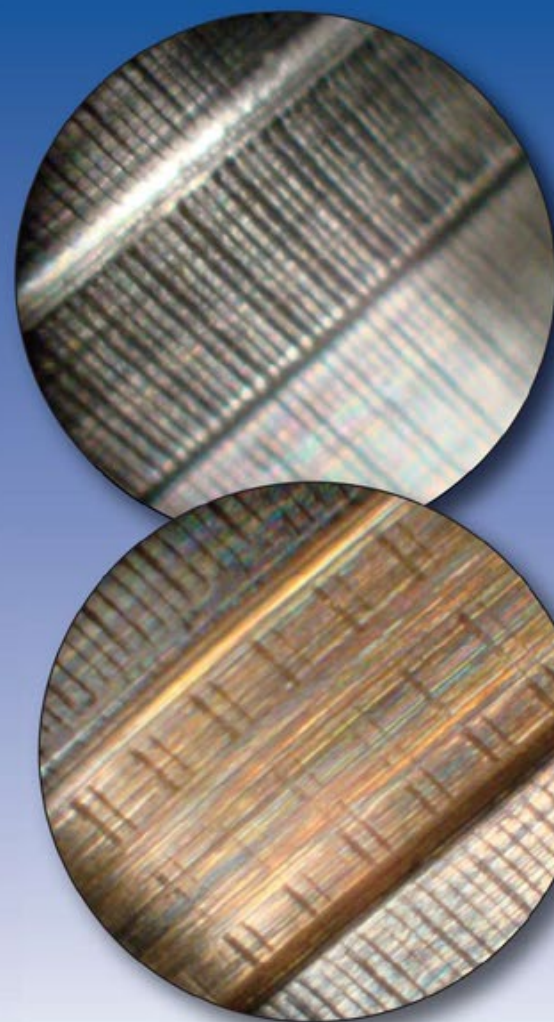
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large batches of .223 reloads. Available in stores and at HORNADY.COM, it's sold in seven-ounce containers for \$11.

Royal Case & Die Lube

Touted as "smooth as butter, sweet as honey," this lube is produced and marketed by SharpShoot-R Precision Products. It goes on a bit thicker than the other spray-on lubes discussed here, but it wipes off easily after sizing and in my experience is the ultimate case lube for tough sizing jobs. I use it exclusively on all big magnum rifle cases and for all case forming operations.

Don't know just what's in it, but it smells wonderful. However, it isn't a breath freshener or perfume. The label warns: "Harmful or fatal if swallowed. May cause eye & skin irritation." So be careful where you spray it and be sure to wash your hands after sizing your cases.

Like the other two, it protects against corrosion, and it's non-gumming. Residue left on cases won't make them rub-

bery over time. I've not seen it in stores, but it's available from SHARPSHOOTR.COM in eight-ounce containers for \$12.

Dillon Case Lube

One of the first great spray-on case sizing lubes, Dillon's Case Lube answered the needs of handloaders cranking out mass quantities of

I think Dillon's Case Lube offers characteristics perfect for use on large quantities of forgiving-to-reload calibers, from straight-walled handgun cases to medium-size bottlenecked rifle cases. It applies easily, spreads evenly and lubes cases well for easy sizing.

Some shooters claim that if applied

OF THE THREE LUBES DISCUSSED HERE,
DILLON'S IS THE ONLY ONE IN A NON-
AEROSOL BOTTLE.

ammo on progressive presses. It is made of lanolin—the miracle lube found in sheep's wool—based in isopropyl alcohol. It's the same good stuff in many hand salves and even most salves for nursing mothers. The two ingredients will separate if left to sit on the shelf, so shake well before spraying.

sparingly there's no need to wipe it off after loading, but I always clean off the residual lube with a clean rag. Of the three lubes discussed here, Dillon's is the only one in a non-aerosol bottle, which will please environmentally minded shooters. Available in stores and at DILLONPRECISION.COM, it's sold in eight-ounce containers for \$9. ■

A WARMINTER



Like most firearm companies, Remington burns a lot of midnight oil coming up with ways to convince hunters and shooters they need to buy more than just one of a particular model. Among the enticements are styling changes and limited editions produced only during a specified period of time, a year being typical. It has to be that way in order for most firearms to survive.

A Model 700 BDL built in 1962, its first year of production, is still one of my favorite rifles, but had the Model 700 stayed exactly the same and had never been offered in other variations, it might not be with us today. Instead, the same basic rifle has been available in about three zillion different styles, variants and calibers, and for that reason, along with the fact it was a good design to begin

with, it remains the most successful sporting rifle of American design.

The Model 700 Classic wearing a stock of true American classical styling appeared during the 1970s and is an example of a subtle change in marketing strategy affecting the sales of a rifle in a positive way. For a while it sold like ice water in the Sahara, but it eventually ran its course and was discontinued. Just when most hunters had forgotten it, a limited-edition version of the exact same rifle was offered in a different caliber each year beginning with the 7x57 Mauser in 1981. That series lasted until 2005 with the .308 Win. as the final offering. Thousands were sold.

The Model 700 CDL SF is another example of the same song being repeated annually, and since it has been playing for several years, it, too, is obviously pay-

ing off for Remington. I am not certain when this series started, but I believe it was the 2006 commemoration of the .30-06's centennial. It was followed, in order, by the .17 Fireball, .260 Rem., .257 Roberts, .280 Rem., 6mm Rem., 7mm Rem. Mag., .300 Win. Mag. and .223 Rem.

The 2015 edition, with the familiar "Model 700 Limited" roll marked on the left side of its receiver, commemorates the company's 50th year of loading the .22-250 Rem. and chambering rifles for it. Engraving on the hinged aluminum floorplate reads "50th Anniversary 1965-2015" and ".22-250 Remington" along with a facsimile of the cartridge. The floorplate lacks the laser-applied scroll engraving of my 2007 rifle in .17 Fireball and so appears rather plain in comparison.

The CDL is one of the more handsome Model 700 stock variations. Of

COMES OF AGE



FIFTY YEARS AGO REMINGTON BEGAN LOADING WHAT TODAY WE KNOW AS THE .22-250. THE COMPANY MARKS THE OCCASION WITH A SPECIAL MODEL 700.

by Layne Simpson

satin-finished American walnut, it has quick-detach sling swivel posts along with a black fore-end tip and a half-inch thick recoil pad of the same color. Cross-bolt plugs in the stock are also black. Laser-cut 24-line checkering is applied in a point pattern with no border overruns revealed by my trusty magnifying glass. Coverage is adequate on the fore-end but skimpy at the wrist. With a circumference of $4\frac{13}{16}$ inches at the small of its grip and four inches around the midpoint of its fore-end, the stock is quite trim.

Fit between barreled action and stock is very good but considerably short of perfection around the trigger guard. A properly applied coat of epoxy-type finish on the exterior as well as all surfaces of the inletting looks nice and discourages entry of moisture.

The 24-inch stainless steel barrel mea-

sures 0.655 inch at the muzzle and has five cooling flutes measuring just over 17 inches long. Its 1:14 rifling pitch is standard for the .22-250. Accidentally whack the muzzle against a rock in the field and a target-style crown should protect the rifling. With the exceptions of a pressure point just forward of the receiver and another directly behind the fore-end tip, the barrel free-floats in the stock.

The body of the bolt has an engine-turned finish. To check the amount of surface engagement between its locking lugs and their seats in the receiver, I used a felt-tipped marker to coat the lugs prior to accuracy testing. After just over 100 rounds were fired, surface contact was approximately 85 percent for the left lug and 70 percent for the right. That's not bad for any mass-produced rifle as it is not uncommon to see rifles from some

manufacturers with only one of a pair of lugs making contact, which is not a good thing for accuracy.

As is common for today's Model 700 rifles, the Model CDL SF has the fully adjustable X-Mark Pro trigger.

Ten pulls with a Lyman digital scale averaged 48 ounces with a maximum variation of 11 ounces. Icicles in December don't break any more crisply, and I couldn't detect any creep or overtravel. If the rifle were mine, I would lighten the pull a bit, but I doubt its factory weight made a great difference in my ability to shoot the rifle to its full accuracy potential.

Varmint rifles fit into two basic categories: those made heavy for sitting in one spot and banging away all day and those made lighter for walking. The Remington weighed seven pounds,

3.6 ounces. Adding a Nightforce SHV 3-10x42mm scope (21.1 ounces) in a Talley lightweight mount (2.2 ounces) and five cartridges (2.7 ounces) took its hunt-ready weight (except for a sling) to eight pounds, 10.6 ounces. That's light enough for leaving tracks over plenty of country in search of varmints from groundhogs to feral pigs. And since porkers have become a popular target for varmint shooters, this would have been an excellent opportunity for Remington to follow Nosler's lead with that company's Model 48 rifle by using a twist rate of 1:8. Many bullets weighing up to 75 grains and stout enough for consistent clean kills on hogs are available, but few are stabilized by a 1:14 twist.

According to a 2015 press release, Remington "introduced" the .22-250 in 1965. Well, not exactly. More correctly put, during that year the company began loading the cartridge, added the cham-

bering to the list of options for the Model 700 Varmint Special and 40-X target rifles and renamed it .22-250 Rem. At that time riflemen across America had been bumping off varmints with the same cartridge for about three decades. And Remington wasn't the first to offer the .22-250 chambering in a factory rifle. Browning beat it to the punch in 1963 with the High Power rifle built on a Sako action. This was quite unusual for a major gun company because no factory ammo was available at the time.

Necking down the .250-3000 Savage case to .22 caliber was such a natural thing to do during the golden era of wild-cat cartridges that it is likely a number of people did it as far back as the 1920s. But gunsmith Jerry Gebby and his friend custom ammunition maker J. Bushnell Smith did more than anyone else to bring it to the attention of varmint shooters across the country.

I believe just as strongly that Charles Newton was the originator of the idea. In addition to designing his own line of rifles and centerfire cartridges, Newton had developed a couple of cartridges for Savage for use in the company's Model 99 rifle. First to be introduced was the .22 Savage Hi-Power in 1912. Three years later came the .250-3000 Savage on a shortened .30-06 Springfield case. Newton followed up by necking down the .250 Savage case for the .227-inch bullet of the .22 Hi-Power, but Savage never got around to chambering production rifles for it.

During a visit with Newton in 1919, Gebby obtained a sample of the cartridge and began chambering rifles for it during the 1930s. Gebby, though, wisely chose to use the more popular bullet diameter of .224 inch and slightly increased shoulder angle to 28 degrees. He called it the ".22 Special." After only a few rifles were chambered for it, Smith suggested ".22 Varminter," and the name stuck. Having the name trademarked seemed like a good idea, but it accomplished nothing. Gunsmiths who were chambering rifles for the cartridge avoided the obstacle by stamping ".22-250" on barrels.

The .22-250 went on to become extremely popular among varmint shooters. When modern benchrest competi-



This rifle sports a good-looking walnut stock and stainless steel barreled action. Fully loaded with a Nightforce 3-10x42mm scope in Talley aluminum mounts weight is just over 8.5 pounds.



The floorplate commemorates 50 years of Remington turning the .22-250 Rem. into a big-time factory varmint cartridge.



The X Mark Pro trigger is fully adjustable, and Simpson reports it breaks like glass right at three pounds with no creep or overtravel.

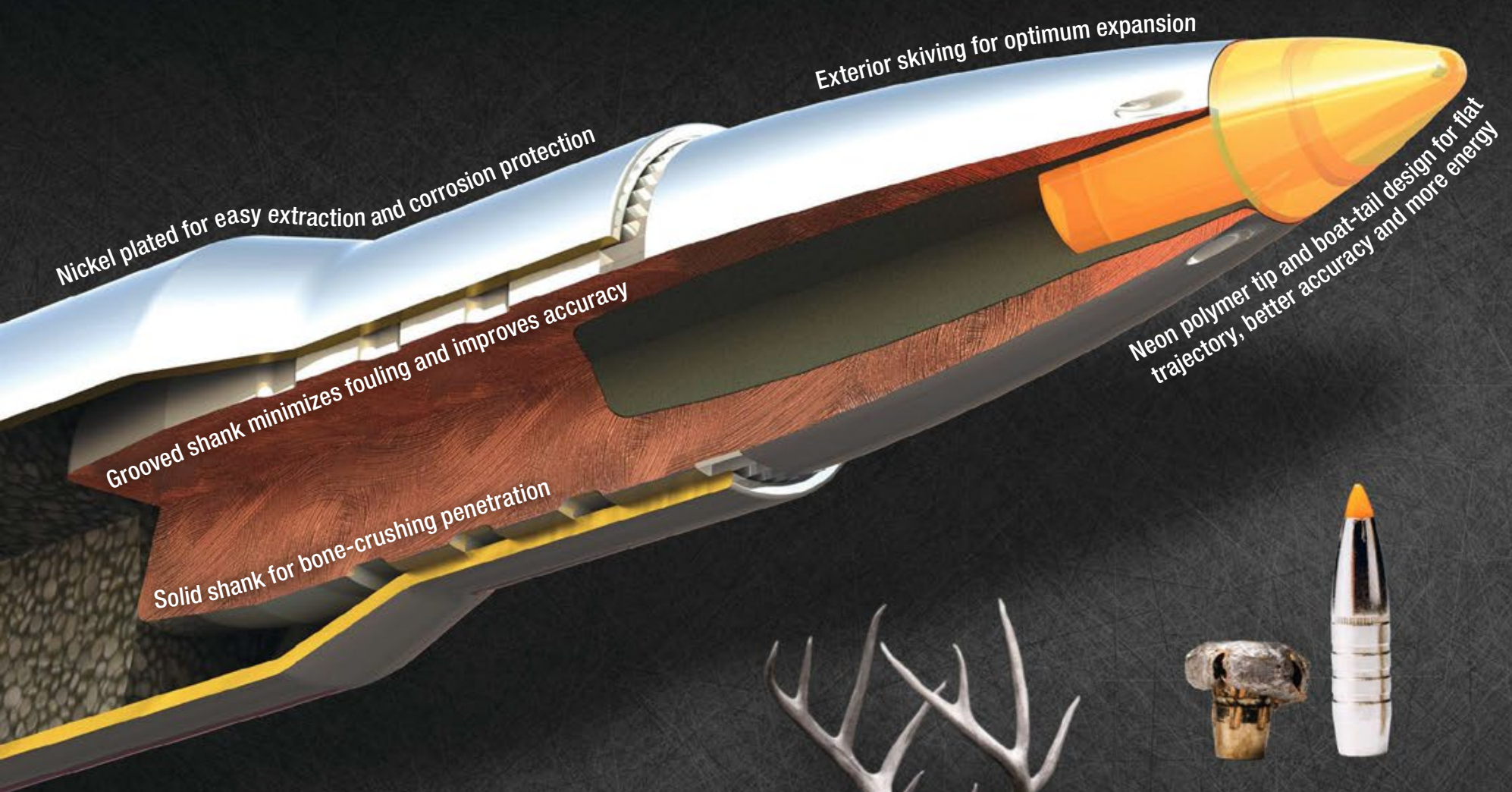
ACCURACY RESULTS

REMINGTON MODEL 700 CDL SF

.22-250 REM.	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
HORNADY VARMINT EXPRESS V-MAX	55	3,612	18	1.44
BARNES VOR-TX TSX FB	50	3,789	11	1.52
NOSLER TROPHY GRADE VARMINT BALLISTIC TIP LF	40	4,166	22	1.74
BLACK HILLS GOLD BARNES VARMINT GRENADE	36	4,184	16	1.82

NOTES: Accuracy results are averages of five five-shot groups at 100 yards from a benchrest. Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured on a Oehler 33 chronograph set 12 feet from the muzzle. Abbreviations: FB, flat base; LF, lead-free

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tion was in its infancy during the late 1940s, it enjoyed considerable popularity there as well. Until a smaller wildcat called .219 Donaldson Wasp came along, the .22-250 and a sharp-shouldered version of the .220 Swift called .220 Arrow



The concept of neck-ing down the .250 Savage to .22 caliber came well before Remington made it a factory round, but the company's adoption of the round certainly put it on the path to long-lasting popularity.

held a number of accuracy records in that game. Col. Townsend Whelen described the .22-250 as the most popular of all wildcat cartridges and included load data for it in his book *Why Not Load Your Own?* Depending on who built the rifle, the cartridge went by different names, so to keep everybody happy, Whelen identified it as .22-250 Varminter.

I first shot a custom rifle in .22-250 during the late 1950s. A heavy-barrel job on a '98 Mauser action, it belonged to an old-timer who lived up the road from our farm. Built by Jerry Gebby during the 1940s, the rifle wore a Lyman Super Targetspot 15X scope.

In those days, match-grade, military surplus .30-06 cases were only slightly more expensive than dirt and were of better quality than some commercial brass. So rather than necking down the more expensive .250 Savage cases, the owner of the rifle used a set of RCBS dies to form .22-250 cases from military match brass. Unlike .30-06 ammunition loaded for the battlefield, those cases did

not have crimped-in primers.

I eventually horse-traded the .22-250 from its original owner, and he included the case-forming and reloading dies. The powder he used was military surplus sold by Bruce Hodgdon who called it H380 because 38.0 grains behind the 55-grain Sierra was his favorite .22-250 varmint medicine. And that's the combination I used.

It was the first rifle I owned that was capable of closely approaching half-minute-of-angle for five shots. I still had the rifle when Remington began loading the .22-250, and while accuracy of the factory ammo was not bad, groups punched in paper were considerably larger than those fired with handloads.

A Cerrosafe casting of its chamber revealed that Remington had precisely duplicated Gebby's chamber dimensions. In an article written by Gebby, published in the September/October 1967 issue of *Handloader*, he expressed resentment toward Remington for receiving neither compensation nor acknowledgement for

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his many years of work with the cartridge.

The first .22-250 load data I saw were developed by Speer Bullets and published in the 1965 *Gun Digest* under the heading "22-250 or Varminter." Max velocities for 50- and 55-grain bullets were 3,855 and 3,784 fps respectively, about what handloaders expect from the cartridge today.

Returning to the present, I rounded

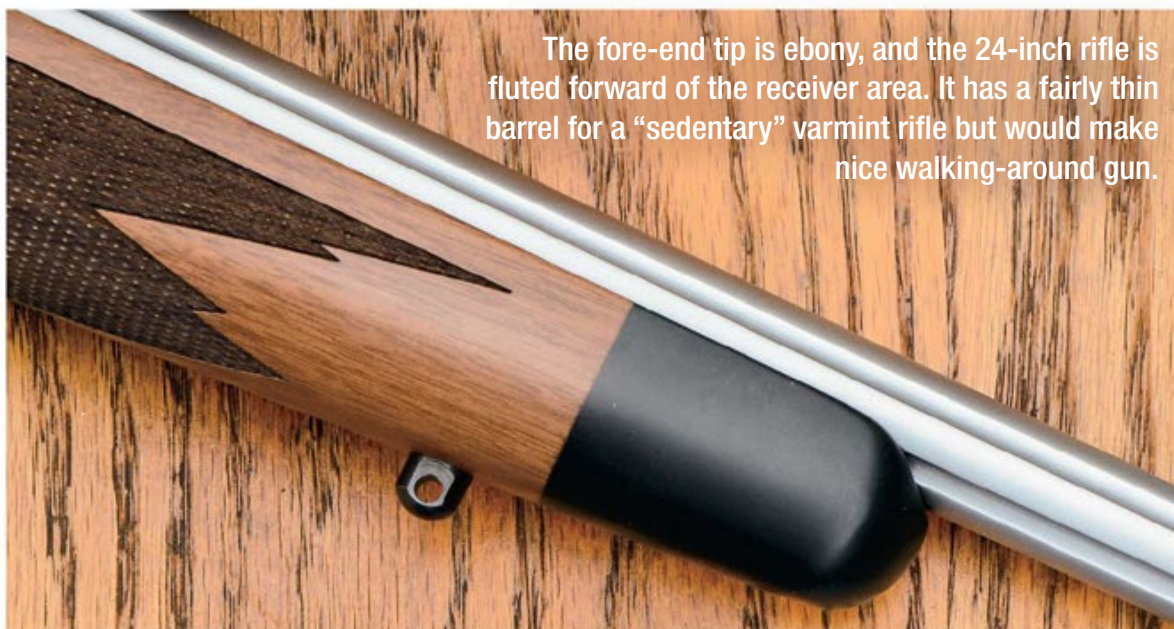
up four factory loads for accuracy testing the Model 700 CDL SF. With the exception of a Browning B78 single shot, all rifles in .22-250 I have worked with through the years had heavy barrels, and all averaged less than an inch at 100 yards. Since the Model 700 Model CDL SF has a fairly thin barrel, I did not anticipate that level of accuracy, and it performed to my expectations.

Slightly less than perfectly round holes punched in paper by the 50-grain Barnes bullet indicated borderline stability from the 1:14 twist, and yet it was the second most accurate. Of the four loads tried, it has the toughest bullet, making it the best feral pig medicine. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

REMINGTON MODEL 700 CDL SF

TYPE	push-feed bolt-action centerfire
CALIBER	.22-250 Rem.
CAPACITY	5
BARREL	24 in., 1:14 twist
OVERALL LENGTH	43.50 in.
WEIGHT	7.25 lb.
STOCK	American walnut
FINISH	matte
TRIGGER	fully adjustable X-Mark Pro
PRICE	\$1,226
MANUFACTURER	Remington, REMINGTON.COM



The fore-end tip is ebony, and the 24-inch rifle is fluted forward of the receiver area. It has a fairly thin barrel for a "sedentary" varmint rifle but would make nice walking-around gun.

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THE WEIGHT

by Craig Boddington

WANT TO TAKE A LOAD OFF YOUR SHOULDER? HERE'S HOW TO FIND THE RIFLE WEIGHT THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU.



On the one hand, rifles are getting lighter and lighter. There's a bunch of factory rifles in the six-pound class, and a couple, like Kimber's Mountain Ascent and short-action Adirondack, tip the scales at five pounds or less. On the other hand, rifles are also getting heavier, with "tactical" and "long-range" versions at twice that weight and more. For instance, have you ever seen a light .338 Lapua? Would you want to? It's an old discussion, but with a new wave of both ultra-lightweights and ultra-heavyweights, the question remains worth asking: Is there an ideal rifle weight?

Only you can answer how much weight you want to carry. It depends on your age, physical condition and physical size. Regardless of strength, a heavy, long-barreled rifle is more unwieldy for a five-footer than for a six-footer. But it also depends on what you're doing.

Kenny Jarrett's concept of the "beanfield rifle" made him famous. It was a long-barreled, fairly heavy rifle intended primarily for the stand hunting millions of whitetail hunters do, with the intent to provide accuracy and reach across, well, soybean fields. But was that a rifle a serious mountain hunter wanted to carry to the roof of the world? Some did, but some customers loved Kenny's accuracy but hated the weight, and in time his rifles got lighter.

Of course, there's hunting and then there's hunting. You can probably get a heavy rifle to almost any deer stand. You can carry one in a vehicle, and you can carry one in a saddle scabbard—provided you don't plan on getting too far from your horse. It's a different story on a backpack sheep hunt or almost any spot-and-stalk Western hunt. You definitely want a rifle with enough capability to get the job done, whatever that job is, but you don't want to pack so much rifle that you wear yourself out.

The first thing to realize is that heavy rifles are not inherently more accurate than light rifles, although they are more stable. We'll talk more about barrels in a bit, but it is almost impossible to have a light rifle with a heavy barrel, and a heavy rifle will almost certainly have a fair amount of weight in the barrel. Heavy barrels are not more ac-

curate than pencil-thin tubes. They are, however, generally less finicky because they don't vibrate as much. They are not as subject to the vagaries of bedding, often more tolerant of the range of loads they will shoot well, and of course, they heat up more slowly and therefore will generally sustain a longer shot string without the bullets starting to "walk."

While these things may be critical to a sniper or varmint hunter, none of them makes much difference to a big game hunter. A good barrel is a good barrel, regardless of weight. A thin barrel is unlikely to hold a five-shot group, but it will certainly hold a two- or three-shot group, and that's generally all you need. So, from a hunter's standpoint, there is no real reason to carry a heavy rifle just for the sake of accuracy.

Stability, however, also applies to the shooter. It is a longstanding article of faith that it's easier to shoot a heavier rifle, especially when you're tired, out of breath and under pressure. I have always accepted this as gospel, but in discussing this story, editor Scott Rupp told me he wasn't so sure about that. This gave me pause because while Scott never toots his own horn, he is one of the finest rifle shots in the industry, and as a former member of the Army shooting team, he has the credentials.

Maybe if you're a good shooter rifle weight doesn't play a big role. Experience and practice count, but exactly how you shoot also makes a difference. If you consistently shoot from a steady rest—whether over a daypack, off a bipod or from the rail of a treestand—it probably doesn't matter. For me, however, when an unsupported shot is all that's available, I find a heavier rifle settles in better and quicker and wobbles less than an ultra-lightweight.

Light rifles certainly kick more. Felt recoil depends somewhat on stock fit and design, and it's certainly mitigated by a good recoil pad. However, recoil is a classic example of Newton's Third Law of Motion regarding "equal and opposite reaction," and without weight to slow this reaction, a lighter rifle produces more recoil than a heavier rifle firing the same cartridge. A six-pound .30-06 kicks a whole lot more than an

eight-pound .30-06, and I don't care who you are: a six-pound .300 magnum isn't fun.

The simplest way to mitigate recoil is to add gun weight. As mentioned, gun weight may also add stability, but, again, you have to carry the weight. The second easiest way is to step down in power, which I discussed last issue.

It really doesn't matter how portable a rifle is if you're afraid to shoot it. So if you must have it light and demand the power, then a muzzle brake is a sound option. I don't care for them simply because of the noise, but they work. Hunting partners and guides hate them, but they can attenuate recoil by as much as 40 percent.

A partial solution is the removable brake so common today. Use the brake to practice on the range, where everybody is wearing hearing protection, and replace it with a thread protector when you go afield. Just remember to check zero again after removing the brake. It's a matter of barrel harmonics; some rifles shift zero a bit with the brake removed, others do not. But don't leave it to chance.

Gun weight comprises primarily three elements: action, stock and barrel. Generally speaking, the action is a large

chunk of metal, and there isn't much to be done to reduce its weight. Blind magazines—which I really don't like because they collect gunk and are harder to clear in case of a misfeed—are lighter than floorplate designs. Alloy floorplates are lighter than steel.

Short actions are lighter than standard (.30-06) or magnum-length actions. And, of course, titanium is lighter than steel. But if weight reduction is a major issue, then you probably want to start with a short action and blind magazine. The Winchester Short Magnums, Remington Short Action Ultra Mags and Ruger Compact Magnums are all about this. They offer performance close to traditional belted magnums but can be housed in shorter, lighter actions. (Of course, they're gonna kick!)

Stock material and design are probably more important than the action in determining final weight. Synthetics are not necessarily lighter than wood. A trim wooden stock can be very light. A synthetic stock of solid construction will be heavier than a synthetic stock that's foam-filled and can be heavier than wood. Laminated stocks, though probably the strongest, are generally the heaviest.

Just for fun I weighed several stocks.



Heavy rifles aren't more accurate than light ones, but they tend to be easier to shoot well in the field. Shooting from a solid rest can narrow that gap, though.



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A beefy walnut stock off a CZ .375 weighed three pounds, almost exactly the same as a beefy laminate stock off an E.R. Shaw .35 Whelen Ackley Improved. The latter rifle with blind magazine and light scope weighs nine pounds. With scope the CZ .375 is over

10. At those levels of recoil, I don't want either rifle much lighter.

To illustrate the difference, I also weighed the trim synthetic stock on a Ruger American .30-06. It's about 1.3 pounds, which is quite a difference from the other two. With such an ultralight

stock and a light polymer magazine, the Ruger American has a head start on being extremely light. However, it actually weighs a bit over six pounds with bases but no scope due to its fairly massive action and beefy barrel. The barrel is not a bad place to put gun weight. As discussed, a heavier barrel isn't more accurate, but on the range, it sure is a lot easier to see how a heavier barrel shoots. Also, I submit respectfully that six pounds is a pretty good starting point for a .30-06.

However, the barrel is a major chunk of steel, and there are several ways to shave barrel weight. Most obvious is simply a thinner barrel, with drawbacks as discussed. Fluting is more costly and is rarely seen on production rifles, but it's a sound proposition. Fluting removes weight and also expands surface area for more rapid cooling. The raised portions between the flutes also act like reinforcing "ribs," so there is little reduction in the actual stiffness of a fluted barrel. Other than cost, there is really no drawback.

Carbon-fiber-wrapped barrels are another option. A conventional steel barrel is turned pencil thin, then reinforced and encased in carbon fiber. The process was pioneered by Christensen Arms, and my most recent experience has been with barrels from Proof Research. The effect is a stiff barrel much lighter than steel and one that simply doesn't heat up. It's bulkier than steel but light with incredible shot-to-shot consistency. The only drawback is cost.

Another important point regarding gun weight is we spend a lot of time comparing factory specifications, but when climbing a mountain the only thing that really matters is the total weight. A normal sling with swivels and four rounds of .30-06-class ammunition increase gun weight by almost a half-pound.

There isn't much to be done about that, but the scope and mounts add a minimum of a pound, and with bigger scopes all the rage, many optics will add more than two pounds. Scopes with 30mm tubes weigh considerably more than scopes with one-inch tubes. Yes, they gather more light and have a



Boddington took this blue sheep at 16,000 feet elevation with a Blaser in .300 Wby. Mag. that weighs 9.5 pounds with everything on it and in it. While such a weight may be more than some are willing to carry, he likes the capability he gets from the rig.



A Kimber Mountain Ascent in .30-06 is super-light and will carry nicely, although its light barrel will heat up quickly—a consideration at the range but likely not in the field.

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THE WEIGHT



Jack O'Connor thought a 7.5-pound total weight was just about right, but he shot a small scope and a .270 Win.—and in the case of the latter didn't have to worry about recoil.

greater range of adjustment. As with everything else, there are trade-offs. If weight is a primary concern, consider going with a smaller, lighter scope, but don't whine if you don't have the capability you want when it comes time to shoot.

Although it's a matter of a few ounces, scope mounts also vary considerably in weight. But no matter what your rifle weighs when you take it out of the box, it's going to weigh between 1.5 and 2.5 pounds more when you scope it, load the magazine, sling it and head up the hill.

So is there a perfect weight? Like so many riflemen of my generation, I often defer to Jack O'Connor's wisdom. He never knew synthetic stocks, but he loved his Winchester Model 70 Featherweight .270s (he had a pair) stocked in trim and fairly light walnut. He figured a "go up the mountain weight" of 7.5 pounds to be a good compromise between portability, stability and shootability.

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That's a nice number, but remember: Jack O'Connor almost never hunted big game with a scope larger than 4X with a one-inch tube. No matter how light your rifle starts out, it is difficult to keep it to O'Connor's recommended weight if you prefer a 30mm scope with high magnification and large objective. Also, O'Connor was a .270 guy, thereby limiting how much recoil he put up with. He certainly wasn't wrong. There isn't much you can't do with either a .270 Win. or a fixed 4X scope.

But some of us have more confidence in greater power and/or flatter trajectory, and today the majority of us want more scope. If you started with a five-pound rifle and put a substantial scope on it, you'd wind up within O'Connor's recommended window.

Sometimes I want more capability, and it comes at a price. One of my long-time favorite rifles is a .300 Wby. Mag. on a left-hand Winchester Model 70, built by Lex Webernick.

Although fluted, it has a stiff 26-inch barrel without muzzle brake. Weight with mounts but without scope is right at eight pounds. With a variable scope and a one-inch tube, we're up to nine pounds. Load it and sling it and we're up to 9.5 pounds. It has gone up an awful lot of mountains exactly that way, and while I wish it was lighter, at that weight recoil is very manageable, and it's easy to shoot well.

I've carried considerably heavier rifles up a lot of mountains, but I don't want to do that anymore. These days, I'm actually trying to cut down, but I like our modern optics, and despite Scott Rupp's pessimism, I still prefer the stability of a slightly heavier rifle.

In recent years I've done a lot of mountain hunting with a Blaser R8, also in a .300 Wby. Mag. barrel with a full-size scope. I realized in working on this article I'd never weighed it, and when I did, I found it's right at 9.5 pounds in full hunting mode. Apparently, this is a weight I'm willing

to carry to get the capabilities I don't necessarily need but that give me confidence.

I do not suggest you should do as I do. Conceptually, I think O'Connor had it right at 7.5 pounds, and at my age, I'm out of my mind to haul a 9.5-pound rifle up anything steeper than my driveway. But with the optics we prefer today, I think it's difficult to get out the door at O'Connor's recommended weight. If you prefer a more powerful cartridge, you probably need a bit more weight anyway, but it is totally unnecessary to carry as much gun weight as I often do.

Today, there's probably a happy medium in the eight- to 8.5-pound class all set and ready to go. But, understand, whether we're talking .270 or .300, I'm speaking here of a general-purpose hunting rifle. A dangerous game rifle is an altogether different kettle of fish. It should probably start at about 9.5 pounds with a .375 and work up as caliber increases. ■

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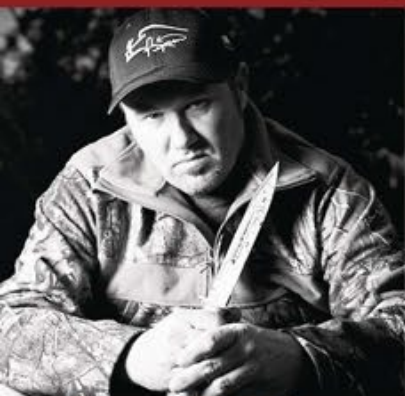




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PROJECT GUN

THE NEW .308 PROJECT RIFLE SERIES FROM BILL WILSON ANSWERS THE NEED FOR A LIGHTWEIGHT AR-10.

by Patrick Sweeney

When Bill Wilson and his crew set out to build a lightweight AR-10, they wanted to make it accurate, reliable, handy and light. And this being Wilson Combat, they also wanted a design that would allow shooters to have it built with the options they want: finish, colors, muzzle devices, rail lengths and so on. The result is the Wilson .308 Project rifle.

Uppers and lowers are Wilson's BILet-AR receivers, which are CNC-machined in-house from billet aluminum. The standard here is 7075 T-6, which is easy to machine, a snap to have anodized, and tough as you can get without going exotic. Rather than slavishly imitate the contours of a forged upper and lower, engineers took out weight from places it didn't need to be and left aluminum in areas where it keeps the receivers strong.

The result is a slab-sided but trim upper, with a built-in case deflector and no forward assist. The upper also has a machined-in full-length top rail, MIL STD 1913, where you can mount the optics or accessories of your choice. As a bonus, there's a spring-loaded dust cover to click shut on the ejection port—always a good thing to have.

The top rail of the upper receiver is aligned with and level with the handguard. It's called the Wilson TRIM rail, which stands for Tactical Rail Interface, Modular. It's a slick idea and well executed. You don't necessarily need or want rails all over the place. A rail-encrusted handguard is bulky, edgy and heavy. So Wilson makes the TRIM as a base rail, a skeletonized cylinder with bolt-lines along three sides. If you want a section of rail at some point, you bolt on what you need, where. You leave the rest bare. It saves weight and bulk.

Michael Anschuetz photo

The gas system on the .308 is pure direct impingement, with a low-profile gas block held to the barrel with setscrews. I'm not usually a fan of gas blocks and front sight assemblies being held on by set screws, but since the TRIM handguard fully covers the gas block, it isn't going to get banged

SPECIFICATIONS	
WILSON COMBAT .308 PROJECT	
TYPE	direct-impingement AR-10
CALIBERS	.308 Win.
CAPACITY	20-round Lance magazine supplied
BARREL	14.7, 16, 18 (tested), 20 in.; 1:10 twist (as tested)
OVERALL LENGTH	36.75–40 in.
WEIGHT	8.25 lb.
FINISH	anodized aluminum, phosphated steel
GRIPS	Bravo Company
STOCK	Wilson/Rogers Super-Stoc
SIGHTS	optional; TRIM accessory/optics rail
TRIGGER	TTU single stage, 4 lb. pull (measured)
PRICE	\$2,995
MANUFACTURER	Wilson Combat, WILSONCOMBAT.COM

around. For as small as it is, and as protected, set screws are good enough. And a more-secure method of attachment would be problematic, since it is underneath the TRIM rail.

The gas tube leads back to a chrome-plated carrier and bolt. The bolt and the forward half of the carrier are scaled-up to be .308 size, but the rear of the carrier is 5.56 size—a common setup for rifles of this kind. The gas key is staked, so there's little worry of it coming loose.

There are four barrel lengths available: 14.7, 16, 18 and 20 inches, fluted and non-fluted, in a variety of rail configurations and muzzle devices. The barrel on the Wilson .308 I received is 18 inches long and fluted, and it has a 1:10 twist.

This rifle came with the Wilson Accu-Tac flash hider, a three-pronged device that is given some extra sculpting to improve muzzle harmonics. Basically, you get first-class flash reduction without the “ping” you hear on every shot with other designs. Made of 4140 steel and surface-treated via the Melonite process, there's no need to change this to something else unless you're mounting a suppressor on the Wilson.

The upper and lower fit is snug but not so tight you need a mallet to get the takedown pins moved for disassembly. One internal detail I noticed was that the lower has a bearing pad underneath the rear takedown lug that presses against the upper when closed. Curious about this, I took off the Bravo Company pistol grip (held on by a normal, slotted screw, thank you Wilson Combat for not using a wretched Allen-head bolt) to find there was no adjustment screw. Hmm.

I also found the rear takedown pin plunger and spring were held on by the pistol grip and not the rear plate, as is the norm on 5.56 rifles. I put it back together and looked at the lug again. It is a relatively simply elastomer plug, set in a recess machined into the lower shelf, and it bears against the upper's lug to remove potential wobble in the fit. Very clever.

The Bravo Company pistol grip is the new and improved design, which I don't like. I learned to shoot ARs a long time ago, and I admit I have bad habits. The Bravo Company grip fills the upper rear of the lower receiver, where the web of your hand rides, pushing the hand down. I like to choke up on pistol grips.

It is also at a sharper angle to the line of the bore, so your hand and wrist aren't torqued as much when you are at Low Ready. The result for me is the pistol grip pushes my hand and arm into an angle I don't like. If the rifle were mine, I would have to get used to it or swap out the grip. The grip has a hinged cap, so you can store good-



The rifle is built from Wilson's BILlet-AR upper and lower receivers, and the author's sample arrived with a Leupold scope clamped in Wilson's Accu-Rizer scope mount (not included with rifle).



In a clever bit of engineering, the takedown pin boss is also the stop shoulder for the selector lever. The single-stage trigger is one of four Tactical Trigger Unit options.



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CALIBER: .458 SOCOM CHAMBER

WEIGHT: 7.6 POUNDS

LENGTH: 37"



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ies inside, and the latch looks stout enough to last as long as you'll be using the rifle.

Inside the lower, Wilson has installed one of its TTUs (Tactical Trigger Unit), in this case a single-stage, four-pound trigger. The TTU is a unitized, or package, trigger assembly. There are no parts to install. It's nice in that the entire assembly can be removed for cleaning and then simply reinstalled. One piece, with no muss, no fuss.

The TTU can be had in one of five different setups: single stage, two stage, 3 Gun, military/law enforcement and Paul Howe. The single-stage, two-stage and 3 Gun versions are all lighter because they're meant for competition and hunting. The military/law enforcement version is heavier because it's intended for people who are also likely to be using a handgun with a heavier trigger pull, and in these instances it's wise to have similar trigger pulls on both systems. Just imagine trying to transition from, say, a pistol with a NY-1 trigger pull at 12 pounds to a rifle with a clean, crisp, 3.75-pound pull.

The Paul Howe TTU is a two-stage trigger but with military-weight springs. This gives you a clean, crisp trigger pull that's a pound heavier than the competition model.

The exterior of the lower shows the attention to detail Bill Wilson and company put into making the .308 as light as possible. The sides of the trigger housing are milled flat. On the trigger housing area, the rear take-down lug reinforcement is used as the stop shoulder for the selector. Push it to Safe and the lever stops against the reinforcement. Press it down to Fire and the lever is unencumbered, and you can readily feel its position. The lever is positioned for right-handed shooters.

an arc to create room for the magazine release button.

The trigger guard is an integral part of the lower, but it is roomy enough to be used with gloves. The front of the magazine well is given a slight curve on the exterior and left smooth, a detail I like. I'm not a fan of using the front of the magazine well as a support point because it just doesn't give me enough leverage to move smoothly from one target to the next.

The stock is the Wilson/Rogers Super-Stoc, with a comfortable con-

THE FRONT OF THE MAGAZINE WELL IS GIVEN A SLIGHT CURVE ON THE EXTERIOR AND LEFT SMOOTH.

The magazine well is also milled flat inside of rectangular reinforcement bars on the edges. The bottom edge is used to create a flared magazine well opening. On the rear of the magazine well reinforcements, Wilson has machined the billet on the left side to create the bolt hold-open boss, and magazine latch support, while on the right side the reinforcement is given

tour, smooth movement and a locking latch to keep it in place once you've settled on a length. The locking latch also clamps the stock tighter, so it has markedly less wobble once locked. One thing I really like on the Super-Stoc is the top loop for a sling attachment. I found it useful for attaching my handy-dandy 550 cord sling swivel.

The idea Bill had on the .308 Project was to deliver a durable, accurate, lightweight rifle, and my sample is not the lightest version available. The low-weight mark is the model with a 14.5-inch barrel, with pinned and welded flash hider, fluted and with a short-to-match TRIM on it. That rifle, bare, runs seven pounds, nine ounces. I've seen 5.56 carbines start out this heavy, so I'd say Bill Wilson and the crew have accomplished their goal. Of course, once you put a scope and mount on it, and load it up, it will weigh more, but they all do. What matters is the starting point.

My test rifle arrived with a Wilson Accu-Rizer scope mount and a Leupold VX-6, 2-12X scope installed. The Accu-Rizer mount is milled from billet, like the receivers are, and has the bore holes for the rings precisely bored on Wilson's CNC machining stations. The Accu-Rizer has a large,

ACCURACY RESULTS				
WILSON COMBAT .308 PROJECT				
.308 WIN.	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
BLACK HILLS BTHP	168	2,536	8.2	0.75
FEDERAL MK 316 MOD 0	175	2,537	22.5	0.75
HORNADY A-MAX	168	2,493	21.4	0.75
HORNADY A-MAX	155	2,678	23.1	1.00
HPR BTHP	168	2,475	13.6	1.00
WILSON COMBAT BARNES TTSX	168	2,443	24.1	1.00
FEDERAL M118LR OTM	175	2,434	15.2	1.25
FEDERAL GOLD MATCH BTHP	168	2,438	41.9	1.25
FEDERAL XM80 FMJ	149	2,683	12.1	1.50
WINCHESTER M80 FMJ	147	2,671	32.1	1.75
NOTES: Accuracy results are averages of five, five-shot groups at 100 yards off a Sinclair front rest and rear bag. Velocities are averages of 10 shots measured on a PACT MKIV chronograph set 15 feet from the muzzle. Abbreviations: BTHP, boattail hollowpoint; FMJ, full metal jacket; OTM, open tip match				

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PROJECT GUN

triangular clamping knob to get the mount super-tight on the top rail. The locking plate is spring-loaded, so it provides consistent tension each time it is installed, aiding reputability. And the top screws on the rings are, glory be, Torx-head screws—and big ones. No more stripping screw slots trying to get the rings tight enough to resist recoil. And the Accu-Rizer can be had in one-inch or 30mm tube size.

As a bonus, if you are a belt-and-suspenders kind of shooter, you can make sure your Accu-Rizer doesn't come loose with paint and cable. I paint in screws and other fasteners.

On the Accu-Rizer, with the slotted lobes of the triangular knob, you can wrap a couple of lengths of monofilament fishing line around the mount pillar and through the knob and tie it tight. That way the knob can't go far even if it tries to come loose. And the slack in the line will alert you to a potential problem. I didn't paint or wrap because the Wilson was here on loan, but were it staying in my safe, I'd be doing my normal routine of keeping things tight.

The Leupold VX-6 is the 2-12x42 CDS, which some might feel is a bit plain as scopes go these days. Where is the illuminated reticle? You can have that if you want it, as well a bullet-drop compensator dial or ballistic reticle. Me, I'm happy with crystal-clear optics, a crisp reticle and repeatable adjustments—all of which this scope has.

The rifle came in a Wilson Combat soft case, complete with a Lancer

The Wilson TRIM rail is a slim design allowing shooters to add rail sections only where they want them, which cuts down on weight and bulk.



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20-round magazine. The Lancer mag is the company's latest, a polymer shell with steel reinforcements. I've been testing Lancer mags since the start. They are hell for tough and ultra-reliable.

As luck would have it, whoever mounted the scope knew what they were doing, and the rear of the scope was right at the rear of the upper receiver. I didn't have to move it just to get started shooting, I simply had to adjust the stock length to fit me.

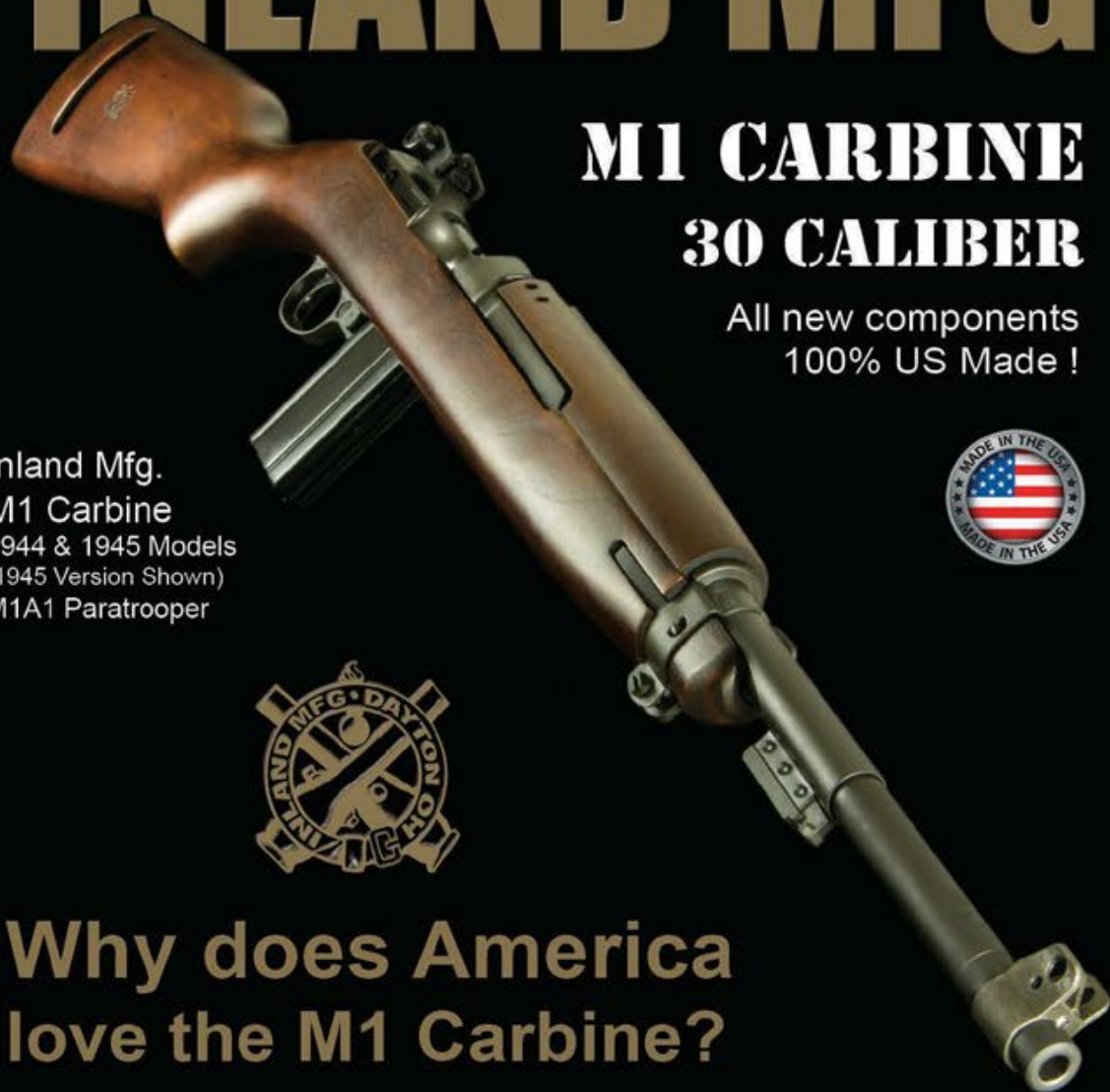
With its light weight, nice balance and crisp trigger, the Wilson .308 is a



The .308 Project rifle is available in four different barrel lengths—fluted or non-fluted—with different muzzle devices. Sweeney got an 18-inch fluted barrel with a three-prong flash hider.



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PROJECT GUN

promising 3 Gun rifle for the Heavy Metal division. Alas, a winter with two feet of snow on the ground is not the time to be testing run-and-gun times, so I had to content myself with sitting at a bench and punching groups—small, satisfying groups, for the most part. Despite the light starting weight, the recoil of the Wilson .308 was not a problem. Add a scope and mount, a magazine with ammo in it, and you dampen felt recoil some. The straight-line recoil of the Stoner system provides a straight-back shove. And the crisp trigger makes it a joy to shoot.

Despite the cold (in the low teens some mornings on the range), I had no problems posting m.o.a. or smaller groups. In putting a wide selection of ammo through the Wilson, I did not have a failure of any kind. I wasn't surprised, since Bill Wilson long ago learned reliability was paramount, even when you're searching for accuracy.

What role does the Wilson .308 serve? Well, it would make a really good hunting rifle. With a reasonably light scope and mount (which the Leupold VX-6 and Wilson Accu-Rizer are), it's a rifle that doesn't feel like an anvil while hauling it to your stand. It will be utterly reliable and as accurate, or more, than you are.

For a police marksman, it would easily replace a .308 bolt-action for precision work. Add the scope of the department's choosing, a solid bipod and perhaps a suppressor, and it would do anything you asked of it. Plus, it would be a lot easier to load and unload, if you needed to change bullet types.

And for the 3 Gun shooter who wants to get into Heavy Metal division, leave off the scope and bipod, add iron sights and a sling, and you're good to go. The price is a bit much, I'll admit, but for this kind of performance, it is money well spent.

I think Bill Wilson has succeeded in his quest. The Project is a light, accurate and well-built rifle you would be hard-pressed to outperform—one that's reliable as can be and fun to shoot as well. ■



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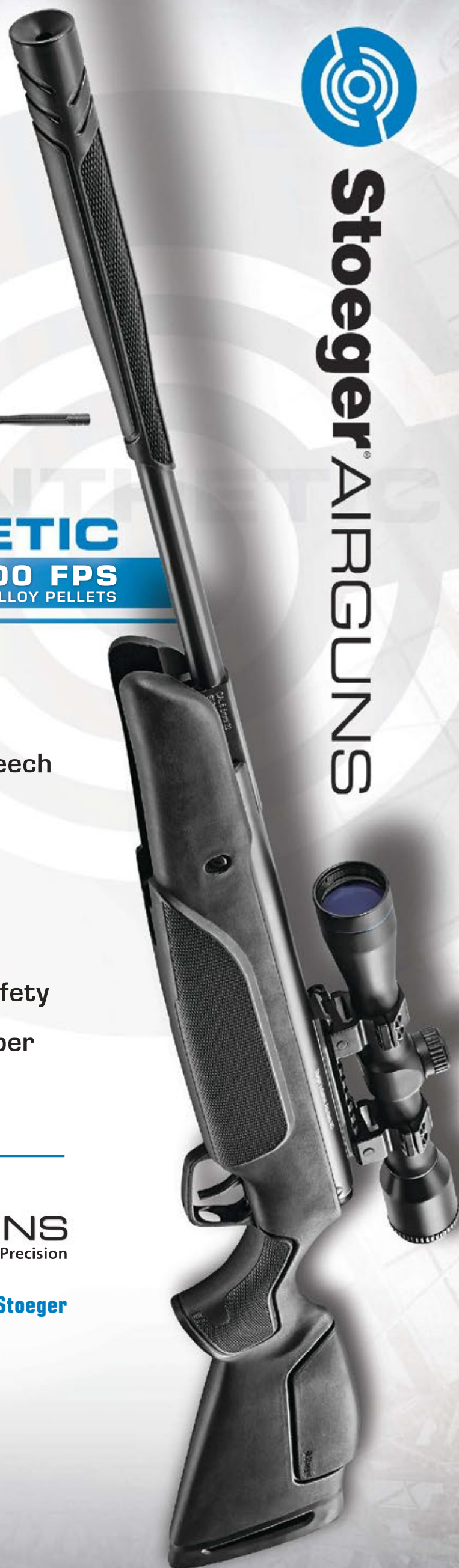
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GOING FIRST CLASS

by Brad Fitzpatrick

DAKOTA'S MODEL 76 TRAVELER IS A BEAUTIFUL, WELL-DESIGNED TAKEDOWN RIFLE FOR THOSE WITH MEANS.

In 1986, gunsmith Don Allen and machinist Pete Grisel joined forces to develop a hunting rifle that combined the reliability of a controlled-round-feed design with luxury accoutrements that, until then, were largely reserved for the most expensive bolt actions from Europe's storied gun makers. This new rifle would borrow the same basic design element that made the Mauser 98 and, later, the Winchester Model 70, famous: a full-length claw ex-

tractor that bites the rim of the cartridge while feeding and retains its hold on the rim throughout the firing, extraction and ejection processes.

This design assures the cartridge will cycle properly because the claw extractor secures the cartridge throughout the entire firing sequence. Many hunters, particularly those who hunted dangerous game, wanted this level of insurance, and in 1986 it was hard to find an American rifle other than the Ruger 77 employ-

ing controlled-round feed. Winchester's Model 70, which until 1963 used the system, had dropped the full-length claw extractor in favor of a more economical push-feed design.

Allen and Grisel understood the value of controlled-round-feed rifles, and they knew hunters wanted an American-made bolt gun using the system. These hunters found what they had been looking for in Allen and Grisel's new design, the Dakota Model 76.



From the outset, Dakota rifles were built with excellent stocks from walnut blanks varying from very good to drool-worthy. The 76 features an action that looks very much like the early Model 70 design with several mechanical improvements. Unlike the original Model 70's open-cone breech, which did not fully support the case head, the Dakota bolt has a steel collet extending beyond the bolt face and locking lugs to fully surround the case head—supporting the

case head in the event of a rupture. The design allows for the claw extractor system and provides an extra level of protection similar to push-feed designs.

In addition, the claw extractor on the Model 76 is wider than the Model 70 at 0.385 inches, allowing for even more bite on the surface of the rim. The 76 uses a spring-mounted ejector that protrudes from the receiver to provide positive ejection when the bolt is pulled fully to the rear, and spent casings strike the ejector blade and are sent spinning into the air with authority. Sliding the bolt forward picks up another cartridge from the magazine, the big claw bites the rim, and the process repeats.

Dakota, which is now part of the Remington Outdoor Company (Remington, Marlin, Bushmaster, Nesika, DPMS and other brands), has upgraded its factory to include the latest wire EDM and CNC machining technology. At the heart of the company, though, are the skilled gun makers who put tremendous time and effort into each rifle that comes out of its Sturgis, South Dakota, facility. Current models include the Classic, Alpine, African, Safari, PH and Traveler, among others.

Of all Don Allen's innovative design features, perhaps the most groundbreaking is his takedown rifle, the Dakota 76 Traveler, in which the barrel and fore-end can be removed with one full turn of an Allen-head "tightening" screw on the right side of the stock. Once the screw is loosened, the barrel and fore-end assembly is pulled straight forward from a sleeve in the receiver.

I have to admit to being skeptical when I read the directions. I am used to takedown rifles that use an interrupted thread design, and I'd never encountered a system this simplistic. I turned the tightening screw on my test rifle 360 degrees counterclockwise as instructed, using extreme care not to let the wrench break free and scratch the gorgeous stock, grabbed the fore-end, and pulled the two halves of the rifle apart. The whole process took less than 10 seconds.

While the Traveler's design is simple and user-friendly, the design requires a great deal of labor and skilled machining says Ward Dobler, the company's operations manager.

"Most takedown rifles use an interrupted thread system, but interrupted threads can wear out over time," says Dobler. "Don Allen worked very hard to develop the Traveler's smooth sleeve system, in which the bolt actually locks into the barrel. With the bolt closed, you don't even need the tightening screw. It's just there to hold the two halves of the rifle together when you're cycling the action."

On the left side of the rifle there's another Allen-head screw that acts as a mechanical wedge to release the receiver from the barrel, but this screw is really just a safety mechanism to help separate the barrel and receiver if they don't easily come apart.

"The left side screw is really a safety system," Dobler says. "If you put the gun in a safe, oil can lacquer-up over time, and that can cause the barrel sleeve to seize. The left-side screw offers you the leverage you need to separate the two halves of the gun."

Unlike the right-side tightening screw, the safety screw on the left side is turned in a clockwise direction. In the event you need the leverage to disassemble the gun, the left screw helps remove the barrel, but the directions provided with the rifle instruct the user to ignore that screw altogether unless the barrel assembly is jammed in place.

And don't get the idea these two screws are obtrusive or ugly. They are recessed slightly into the stock, their black coloration helps them blend into the figure and flame of the walnut, and the fit and finish is excellent.

The advantage to this system, aside from the obvious ability to break down your gun for easy transport, is the Dakota system allows you to have one rifle that fires two different cartridges within the same family.

The Model 76 Traveler is available in three grades—Classic, Safari and African—but because of variations in the physical dimensions of the fore ends you can't mix and match sets. That means if you want a .458 Lott African your other barrel will also have to be an African Grade regardless of caliber so the action and fore-end mate correctly.

According to Dobler, the most common pairing is the .300 H&H and .375 H&H, but there are many cartridge

GOING FIRST CLASS

options available, including pairings from Dakota's own line of proprietary cartridges.

All Model 76 rifles are pillar-bedded, but those chambered for heavyweight calibers (.416 and up) and all of the African Grade rifles and barrel sets receive Devcon bedding. Devcon is considered

by many gunsmiths to be the most effective bedding compound available.

When I'm testing guns for *RifleShooter* I usually head to the local public range, but I decided not to do that with the Traveler. In part, I knew it would draw a crowd to my bench and everyone would want to handle this elegant and expen-

sive rifle that had been entrusted to my care. Additionally, this test would take longer than most range sessions because I was not only examining the rifle's accuracy but also its repeatability after disassembly/reassembly, so I took the gun to a private range where there wouldn't be any distractions.



Rather than interrupted threads used in other designs, the Traveler employs a smooth sleeve to mate barrel and receiver. A relatively unobtrusive "tightening" screw on the right side locks it up.



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Dakota provided me with Talley bases and 30mm rings, and I mounted a Burris Veracity 2-10x42mm on the Traveler. As you might expect with a rifle of this quality, every mechanical operation was slick and smooth. The bolt runs seamlessly through the raceway, thanks in part to Dakota's advanced wire EDM machining as well as the individual attention each of these guns receives at the factory.

The model I tested was the Traveler Classic grade, which features pillar bedding, a standard internal box magazine

with floorplate release on the front of the trigger guard and no iron sights. But like all Dakota rifles, the Classic grade can be had with a wide array of options (at extra cost, of course). The bolt handle on this particular gun had been upgraded to include three-panel checkering, and it provided an extra level of grip when working the action and added to the gun's regal bearing.

The three-position safety is similar in design and function to the one you'll find on a Model 70, but there's no obvious

bolt release button or lever on the left side of the receiver. Instead, the Traveler, like other Model 76 rifles, uses a swing-out lever that rotates forward 90 degrees to allow for bolt removal. When closed, this lever rests flush with the receiver.

I loaded three Hornady 180-grain Interlocks into the magazine, cycled the Traveler's action and settled down behind the Bastogne walnut stock. Accuracy with factory ammunition was excellent, as you can see in the accompanying chart. You would expect this from a rifle of this ilk, but perhaps the most telling test was how well the rifle performed after being taken apart and reassembled.

Dakota promises you can sight in the Traveler, disassemble the gun, put it back together and expect bullets to land in the same place. To test this claim, I paused between each three shot group to take the rifle apart and reassemble it. In addition, I waited for the rifle to cool completely between shots. It's hardly fair to compare one group fired from a cool barrel with another fired from a hot one,

ACCURACY TEST				
DAKOTA 76 TRAVELER				
.300 Win. Mag.	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
WINCHESTER SUPER X POWER-CORE 95/5	150	3,329	15.8	0.95
FEDERAL FUSION	165	3,085	22.8	1.21
HORNADY INTERLOCK	180	2,912	19.1	0.85
NOTES: Accuracy results are average of three three-shot groups at 100 yards from a fixed rest. Velocity figures 10 shot averages recorded on a ProChrono digital chronograph placed 10 feet from the muzzle.				



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so testing the Dakota's repeatability required an additional hour of cooling time.

I gave the barrel time to return to ambient temperature between three-shot groups, then compared the location of the groups relative to the center of the target to determine whether or not the gun was living up to its claim of repeatable accuracy. And just as Dobler said, the groups remained very close. Using the grid system on the target, I placed a black dot at what I believed to be the center of each group

fired, then used the grid to compare points of impact for all three groups tested.

The Hornady Interlock loads had a repeatability measurement averaging 0.49 inch at 100 yards. As this load proved to be the most accurate in this rifle, I think it makes sense its point of impact was also closest on reassembly. The second load I tested was Winchester's 150-grain Super-X Power-Core load, which averaged right at 1.0 inch of accuracy and provided repeatability measurements of 0.72 inch.



When reassembled the gun promises to retain point of impact, and it did to a relatively good degree. There's certainly no denying it's a handsome rifle; the optional Bastogne XXX walnut doesn't hurt.



Options abound on the Traveler, including three-panel checkering on the bolt handle knob, and Fitzpatrick found the stock itself to fit and feel much like that on a fine shotgun.

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Federal's 165-grain Fusion load produced average groups of 1.21 inches and had a repeatability measurement of 0.97 inch among the groups fired. In short, the Traveler lives up to its claim regarding both accuracy and, perhaps to a lesser extent depending on your expectations, point of impact retention.

As an avid shotgunner, I love the Traveler's stock design. The straight comb helps consistently align the eye with the scope, the wrist of the stock is straighter than many other bolt actions, and the fore-end is rounded and narrows toward the ebony tip. All this gives the Traveler the feel of a fine shotgun, and it comes easily to the shoulder and points naturally.

As I mentioned, the Classic is available with lots of options, and the gun I tested had plenty: a leather buttpad; wrap-around checkering; a jeweled bolt with the aforementioned three-panel checkering; ebony fore-end tip; inletted swivel; barrel band sling stud; a gold oval for add-

ing initials; and upgraded Bastogne XXX walnut. The base price of the standard is \$7,240 while the version I tested sells for \$10,320 (\$160 of which is the cost of the bases and rings).

So, no, it's not a rifle for everyone, but for those with the means it's a beautiful, well-built and accurate rifle that can be broken down for travel and reassembled when you get to your destination—with the assurance you're going to be quite close to your original zero. The addition of an extra barrel does, in essence, allow you to own two rifles when purchasing a Traveler combo and makes this a much more versatile firearm for the traveling hunter.

Before you roll your eyes at the price, bear in mind that, despite the cost, this is a rifle built on a blueprinted action with the finest components and requires a great deal of time and effort to produce—not a gun that slides off an assembly line. Attention to detail costs money, but if you are into luxury travel, this is your rifle of choice. ■

SPECIFICATIONS

DAKOTA 76 TRAVELER CLASSIC

ACTION TYPE	bolt-action centerfire takedown
CALIBER	.300 Win. Mag. (as tested); multiple chamberings available
CAPACITY	3+1, internal box magazine w/hinged floorplate
BARREL	24 in.
OVERALL LENGTH	45 in.
WEIGHT	8.4 lb.
STOCK	Bastogne XXX walnut (as tested)
FINISH	rust blue (as tested)
TRIGGER	3.25 lb. (measured)
SIGHTS	none; drilled and tapped for scope
PRICE	\$10,320 (as tested)
MANUFACTURER	Dakota Arms, DAKOTAARMS.COM

The advertisement features a collection of high-quality tools and gun components, including several green-handled Sinclair screwdrivers, various metal drill bits, and gun barrels, all arranged on a dark, textured surface. The Sinclair International logo is prominently displayed in the center, featuring a target graphic with the numbers 8, 9, and 10, and the word 'Sinclair' in a large, stylized font, with 'INTERNATIONAL' in smaller letters below it.

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BIG GAME RIFLES 2015

WHETHER YOU'VE GOT \$500 OR \$12,000 TO DROP ON A NEW RIFLE TO USE FOR DEER, ELK AND MORE, THERE'S SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE THIS YEAR.

by Brad Fitzpatrick



This year's new rifles range in caliber from .243 up to .458 Lott, in weight from five to 10 pounds and in price from \$500 to more than \$12,000, so no matter the game, the terrain or the budget, there's a gun here for you. Note: All rifles listed here are .24 caliber and above.

Barrett

The Tennessee rifle maker has introduced the M98B Fieldcraft rifle, a bolt gun with a decidedly tactical look far removed from anything else in the category. It comes with a 24-inch stainless barrel, a lightweight aluminum chassis, a long top rail and an AR-style safety mounted on the left side of the receiver so the shooter can switch the gun to the Fire position without moving his or her hand. The cheekpiece is adjustable, and the gun weighs nine pounds.

Browning

The AB3 budget rifle is now available in a short-action version (.243, 7mm-08, .308 and .270 and .300 WSM). The BAR ShortTrac and LongTrac semiauto rifles can now be had with synthetic stocks finished in Mossy Oak's new Break-Up Country camo.

Two new X-Bolts are Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation rifles, and a portion of their sales receipts goes to the organization. They include the Special Hunter and the White Gold, both of which are chambered to .300 WSM. The Special Hunter has a low-luster blue finish on the barrel and satin-finished walnut stock, and its grip cap features the RMEF logo. The White Gold version is a fancier gun with stainless metal, gold engraving and rosewood accents on the high-grade walnut stock.

And staying with the fancy motif, Browning is also bringing out an X-Bolt High Grade Hunter Full Line Dealer. Quite a mouthful, but it's quite a rifle: You just don't see octagon-barreled guns



anymore. Stocks are oil-finished Grade III/IV walnut with rosewood fore-end and grip caps. The Micro Midas, a deluxe rifle designed for smaller shooters (shorter stock, 20-inch barrel), adds the .300 WSM chambering for 2015.

CZ-USA

The new CZ 527Y Youth bolt-action rifle features a wood stock, iron sights, a two-position safety and a detachable box mag. Interestingly, it's chambered in 7.62x39. Also new this year is a bargain-priced, synthetic-stock version of the 557 push-feed action; it's chambered in 6.5x55, .270 Win. and .30-06.

Another new addition is the CZ 550 Craig Boddington rifle in .375 H&H, which is limited to 50 guns (45 right hand, five left hand). Upgrades include a jeweled bolt, engraved floorplate, shortened barrel, improved sights, red recoil pad and more. Also, the 550 Western series adds the .26 Nosler.

Howa

Check out the new Alpine, a lightweight, weather-resistant rifle built on

the company's popular 1500 action. To shave weight, it has a light, No. 1 contour, 20-inch barrel; a hollowed bolt handle; and a lightweight Banner High Tech composite stock. All metalwork is treated with a Cerakote finish, so it's virtually impervious to the elements.

Other features include a lightweight, two-stage Howa Actuator Controlled Trigger and a Pachmayr Decelerator butt pad. It's available with a standard floorplate metal or the company's new Ammo Boost detachable magazine system. There's also a combo rifle that comes with a 3-9x42mm Vortex Viper scope mounted with Talley rings. Suggested retail price for the rifle without scope is around \$1,200.

Kimber

While the company didn't launch any brand-new hunting rifles in 2015, it has expanded the Adirondack and Mountain Ascent to include several popular calibers. The Mountain Ascent is now available in 7mm Rem. Mag. and .300 Win. Mag. as well as .270 and

.300 WSM. The short-mag versions weigh just five pounds, 13 ounces while the long-action magnums weigh in at six pounds, eight ounces. An integral brake helps reduce recoil.

The even lighter Adirondack is now available in .300 BLK and 6.5 Creedmoor. The Creedmoor comes with an 18-inch barrel, the .300 BLK with a 16-inch pipe, and both guns have threaded muzzles and weigh less than five pounds.

Marlin

The firm's operations have been revamped, and the company is launching two new .45-70 rifles. The 1895 GSBL features a painted green laminate stock, a tough ferrous nitro-carburized exterior, 18.5-inch barrel and a six-round magazine capacity. The other new Marlin, also chambered in .45-70, is the 1895 Limited Edition, which features a 24-inch octagon barrel, a full-length magazine tube, engraved receiver with gold inlays and a checkered walnut stock with a traditional brown recoil pad.



Browning BAR LongTrac Mossy Oak



Browning X-Bolt High Grade Hunter



Howa Alpine



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Mauser

It's hardly a new design, but Mauser is once again producing its M98 Double Square Bridge Magnum rifles in dangerous game calibers. It has the traditional controlled-round-feed design and integral scope bases machined to the receiver, but the new rifle has a three-position wing safety that's similar in look and function to Winchester's Model 70. Rifles come outfitted with express sights with two folding leaves and a barrel band sling stud.

The standard 98 Magnum rifle comes with Grade V walnut, ebony fore-end tips and a factory-shot target to verify regulation of the iron sights. The .416 Rigby version is available with either a standard magnum contour barrel or a heavy barrel to help reduce recoil.

Montana Rifle Company

The Extreme X2 rifle and the Extreme Vantage V2 are both built on the company's 1999 action, a unique design that borrows features from both the Winchester Model 70 and Mauser 98. The big difference is these rifles come with

Montana Rifle's new composite stocks. And between the two of them, you surely couldn't ask for more in terms of caliber options—which range from .243 Win. to .458 Lott, in both right- and left-handed versions. V2 rifles come with adjustable iron sights.

Mossberg

The new Patriot bolt-action rifle, which graced *RifleShooter's* May/June cover, is available in calibers from .243 to, notably, .375 Ruger. This brand-new design features a fluted bolt, Mossberg's adjustable LBA trigger system, fluted or unfluted barrels, optional iron sights and a variety of different stocks. And for an extra \$70 you can buy it as a scoped combo (combo in .243, .270 Win., .308, .30-06 and .300 Win. Mag. only).

All rifles have push-feed bolts with dual opposed locking lugs, a two-position safety and a detachable box magazine. Bantam versions feature adjustable stocks with removable inserts, so the gun's length of pull can be adjusted as a youngster grows, and there are scoped combos available as well.

In addition to the Patriot line, Mossberg has also introduced its own version of the Scout rifle built on the MVP design. It sports an 11-inch top rail with an integrated ghost ring sight, a 16.25-inch medium threaded bull barrel with A2 muzzle brake, LBA trigger and a synthetic stock with rails for mounting accessories. It's available without an optic or as a combo with a 1-4x28 YTG EER scope, and like other MVP rifles, it accepts AR-style magazines.

For those who like to reach out, there's the MVP-LR as well. Available in 7.62/.308 for big game hunters, it has all the features common to the MVP but comes with a 20-inch, threaded, medium bull barrel and a benchrest-style Mosscoat OD green stock that permits not only comb height adjustment via the push of a button, but also a half-inch worth of cast adjustment. Weight is seven pounds.

Nosler

The big news is the addition of the hot new .28 Nosler. Based on the same case that houses the successful .26 No-



Mauser M98 Magnum

Marlin 1895 GSBL

Mossberg MVP-LR

2015 RIFLESHOOTER BUYER'S GUIDE

MAKE/MODEL	MSRP	.243 Win.	.25-06 Rem.	.257 Wby. Mag.	6.5x55	6.5 Creedmoor	6.5-284 Norma	.260 Rem.	.270 Win.	.270 WSM (Wby.)	7mm-08 Rem.	.280 Rem. (Ackley Imp.)	7mm WSM (Wby.)	7mm Rem. Mag.	.30-30 Win.	7.62x39	.300 BLK	.308 Win.	.30-06	.300 WSM	.300 Win. Mag. (Wby.)	.325 WSM	.338 Federal	.338 Win. Mag. (Lapua)	.35 Whelen	.375 Ruger	.375 H&H	.45-70 Gov't.	.416 Ruger (Rigby)	.416 Rem. Mag.	.458 Win. Mag. (Lott)
Savage Axis Heavy Barrel	\$386	•																•													
Mossberg Patriot	\$485*	•	•						•		•			•				•	•		•			•		•					
Ruger American Ranch	\$499																•														
Winchester XPR	\$550								•										•		•			•							
Browning AB3 short action	\$600	•								•	•							•		•											
Savage 11 Trophy Predator Hunter	\$692*	•				•																									
CZ 527Y Youth Carbine	\$739															•															
CZ 557 Sporter Synthetic	\$739				•				•											•											
Weatherby WBY-X Vanguard Highlander	\$749	•							•									•	•												
Weatherby WBY-X Vanguard Volt	\$749	•									•							•													
Weatherby WBY-X Vanguard Saratoga	\$749	•							•									•	•												
T/C G2 Contender Complete Rifle	\$769														•																
Mossberg MVP Scout	\$777*																	•													
Savage 11 Scout	\$794																	•													
Remington Model 7 Stainless	\$838	•						•			•							•		•											
Winchester M70 Ult. Shadow Hunter	\$895	•							•	•	•							•	•	•	•	•		•							
Mossberg MVP-LR	\$996																	•													
Remington Model Seven LS	\$1,040	•									•							•													
Ruger Hawkeye Predator FTW	\$1,099					•												•													
Ruger Scout Composite	\$1,107																	•													
Browning RMEF X-Bolt Special Hunter	\$1,110																			•											
Winchester M70 Ult. Shad. Hunt. SS	\$1,125	•							•	•	•							•	•	•	•	•		•							
Marlin 1895 GSBL	\$1,150																												•		
Howa Alpine	\$1,200*	•				•					•							•													
Montana Rifle Extreme X2	\$1,299	•	•				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•						
Marlin 1895 LE	\$1,350																												•		
Browning BAR ShortTrac Mossy Oak	\$1,408	•								•	•							•		•											
Browning BAR LongTrac Mossy Oak	\$1,420								•					•					•		•										
Montana Rifle Extreme Vantage V2	\$1,441																				•			•	•	•	•		•	•	•
Browning X-Bolt High Grade Full Dlr.	\$1,490	•							•	•				•				•	•	•	•										
Browning RMEF X-Bolt White Gold	\$1,540																			•											
Remington R-25 GII	\$1,670	•						•			•							•													
Steyr Camouflage Scout	\$1,799																	•													
Weatherby Mark V Arroyo RC	\$2,900			•					•	(•)		(•)	•					•	•		(•)			(•)							
Weatherby Mark V Outfitter RC	\$2,900			•					•	(•)		(•)	•					•	•		(•)										
Sako 85 Carbonlight	\$3,000	•						•			•							•													
CZ 550 Craig Boddington	\$3,099																											•			
Barrett M98B Fieldcraft	\$3,995					•		•						•				•		•											
Weatherby 70th Anniv. Mark V	\$5,900			•																											
Mauser M98 Magnum	\$12,500																										•		(•)		

Prices are suggested retail based on the best information we had at press time. Prices reflect the majority of variants in a particular model or an average of all variants; individual variants may cost more or less than the price listed. Suggested retail prices are set by manufacturers and are not necessarily the prices charged by retailers. Due to space constraints, some rifles may be offered in chamberings in addition to those shown. Rifle models that were changed in 2015 by only adding a new chambering are described in the text but not included here.

*Indicates scoped combo package as listed or available as an option for a higher price; chamberings may differ from unscoped models.

sler, the .28 Nosler is capable of driving a 160-grain bullet at 3,300 fps. Nosler is offering its .28 cartridge in Patriot and Heritage production rifles as well as the firm's Custom guns. Both the Patriot and the Heritage have a two-position safety; free-floated, match-grade stainless barrels; Cerakote finishes; and offer a one m.o.a. accuracy guarantee at 100 yards with prescribed ammo. The Patriot comes with a composite stock, and the Heritage has a hand-oiled walnut stock with 20-lpi checkering.

Remington

The company is adding to its Model Seven line of short, light bolt actions. New this year is the Model Seven LS, which comes with a laminated stock with schnabel fore-end, adjustable iron sights and a light-contour 18.5-inch barrel. Additionally, Remington is also introducing the Model Seven Stainless with a 20-inch barrel and a synthetic stock. Both rifles weigh about 6.5

pounds, and both feature X-Mark Pro adjustable triggers.

Also new is the R-25 GII, an AR rifle with a 20-inch Teflon-coated barrel with muzzle crown, two-stage match trigger, carbon fiber handguard and a light-weight fixed stock with Super Cell recoil pad. The receiver, stock and handguard are finished in Mossy Oak Infinity camo.

Ruger

There's a new version of the Hawkeye Predator called the FTW that features three half-inch spacers that allow shooters to easily adjust length of pull. Otherwise it's similar to other Hawkeye Predator rifles, and it comes with a Green Mountain laminate stock, matte stainless finish, scope rings and integral bases and an adjustable two-stage trigger.

Ruger has also added a composite stock version of its popular Scout rifle, which is chambered in .308 Win. and comes with iron sights, muzzle brake,

detachable box magazine and adjustable stock. The Scout Composite is available with either a blued or stainless finish.

Also new is the Ruger American Ranch Rifle, which comes with a 16-inch barrel, flat dark earth composite stock, a top rail for mounting optics and a detachable box magazine. There's also a compact version with a 12.5-inch length of pull.

Sako

The Model 85 Carbonlight is the Finnish firm's new entry in the ultra-light rifle segment. It's the lightest centerfire bolt-action rifle the company has ever built—thanks in large part to the advanced carbon fiber stock and 20.25-inch fluted barrel, which give it an overall unloaded weight of just about five pounds. It comes with a three-lug bolt, two-position safety, integral scope bases and an adjustable trigger that ranges from 2.2 to four pounds. And,

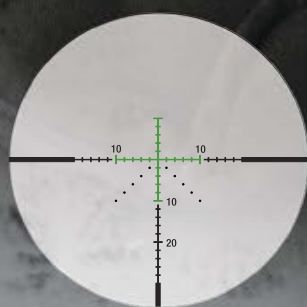


Nosler Heritage/.28 Nosler

Remington Model Seven LS

Ruger American Ranch

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Note: Reticles enlarged for detail. Not all reticle options are available in each model.

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NEW & NOTABLE

6.5 GREEDMOOR Kimber adds it to the Adirondack. New rifles chambering it include Howa Alpine, Savage 11 Trophy Predator, Barrett M98B and Ruger Hawkeye Predator FTW.

.26 NOSLER Now chambered in CZ-USA's 550 Western and Montana Rifle's Extreme X2.

.28 NOSLER The hot new 7mm version of the .26 Nosler is being chambered in Nosler's Patriot, Heritage and Custom.

.300 BLK Kimber adds it to the Adirondack, and it's in the new Ruger American Ranch Rifle too.

.338 FEDERAL Added to six Savage models (see the Savage section) and chambered in Montana Rifle Extreme X2.

.375 RUGER Now in Mossberg's Patriot, Montana Rifle Extreme Vantage V2.

like other Sako 85 rifles, it's backed by the company's five-shot one m.o.a. guarantee.

Savage

Like several other brands, Savage has added a Cooper-inspired Scout rifle to its line. The Model 11 Scout is chambered in .308 Win. and comes with aperture rear sights, an extended top rail for mounting extended eye relief optics, a flat dark earth AccuStock, adjustable trigger and cheek piece and a threaded barrel with a muzzle brake.

Also new is the Axis Heavy Barrel, which is similar to the company's other budget-priced Axis guns but comes with a heavy-contour, button-rifled 22-inch barrel and weighs around eight pounds. The new Model 11 Trophy Predator Hunter comes with a medium-contour barrel, synthetic stock in either Realtree Hardwoods Snow or Mossy Oak Brush camo and

is topped with a 3-9x40mm Nikon scope with BDC Active Target reticle.

Last but not least, the brand is chambering six of its rifles—Model 11 Long Range Hunter, Trophy Hunter XP and Hog Hunter and Model 16 Bear Hunter, and Trophy Hunter XP and FCSS—in .338 Federal this year.

Steyr

The Austrian firearms maker was the first to offer a production Scout rifle, and this year it's selling one dressed in three different camo patterns (Early, Mid and Late Fall). It comes with a 20-inch cold-hammer-forged barrel, which gives the rifle an overall length of less than 40 inches and a weight of just over 6.5 pounds.

There are five mounting points for a sling, an integrated bipod and space in the stock for additional magazine storage. The two-position magazine locking system acts as a magazine cut-off, and like other Scout rifles, it has a



Sako Carbonlight



Savage Axis Heavy Barrel



Steyr Scout Late Fall Camo

long top rail for mounting extended-eye-relief scopes.

Thompson/Center

It's been relatively quiet on the Contender front for a while as the company has focused its long-gun attention on bolt rifles. But this year brings a new G2 Contender Complete Rifle System, and it's chambered in, of all things, .30-30 Win., which is pretty cool. The "system" designation means it comes with a 23-inch barrel, stock and fore-end, and from that base you can build out an arsenal with different calibers in blued or stainless barrels.

Weatherby

In honor of its 70th year in business, the company has produced a limited edition 70th Anniversary Mark V rifle with exhibition-grade Califor-

nia claro walnut with a high-gloss finish, skip-line checkering and custom floorplate metal. It's chambered in the .257 Wby. Mag., Roy Weatherby's favorite, and comes with a matching knife designed and built by Dan Weatherby.

New additions to the WBY-X line of Vanguard rifles include the Volt, which features a green splatter adjustable stock and 20-inch barrel; a new Kryptek Highlander Reduced version with V2 camo stock; and the Saratoga with a V2 synthetic stock with American Flag pattern Weatherby calls One Nation Vintage.

There are two new custom shop rifles, both on the Mark V action and both with a one m.o.a. accuracy guarantee. The Arroyo RC has a No. 3 contour fluted barrel with contrasting desert tan and flat dark earth

Cerakote on the barrel and the flutes respectively and a hand-laminated Monte Carlo stock dressed in Kuiu Vias camouflage. The Outfitter RC is a lightweight rifle at as little as 5.5 pounds, depending on caliber, and is available from the custom shop. Metalwork is treated with "armor black" Cerakote.

Winchester

Big news for Big Red is the introduction of a totally new bolt-action design, the XPR, which is reviewed elsewhere in this issue. The new push-feed bolt comes with three locking lugs for a short bolt lift, a two-position safety and a bolt release button. The Model 70 Ultimate Shadow Hunter and Ultimate Shadow Hunter SS rifles are now available with new Mossy Oak Break-Up Country camo stocks. ■



T/C G2 Contender Complete Rifle



Weatherby WBY-X Vanguard Kryptek



Winchester M70 Ultimate Shadow Hunter SS

A BETTER MOUSETRAP

SPRINGFIELD'S M1A GETS SOME KEY UPGRADES THAT TAKE THE ICONIC DESIGN TO A NEW LEVEL.

by David M. Fortier



I bought my first Springfield Armory M1A when I was 15. At the time I had a job working after school at the local general store in Union, Maine. Gordon's Market was its name, and I earned a whopping \$3.35 an hour doing whatever needed to be done. Every week I deposited every dime I made into a savings account at the small bank on Union Common. When I had finally earned enough, I made a beeline to a local FFL with cash, a *Shotgun News* ad and a parent in tow. A few weeks later the most beautiful rifle a boy could ever imagine arrived, and so started a love affair with Springfield Armory's M1A.

Thirty-three years later, my eyes are not what they used to be, and, well,

neither is my hair. I've learned a lot about the M14, M21 and M1A over the years. I've prowled the backwoods of Maine after big game with an M1A, hunted "leg" points with an M14 National Match in competition, listened to cavalry troopers bitch about them in Iraq and shot countless rounds through them on semi and full automatic recreationally. I've learned the system's strengths and weaknesses, and while hardly perfect, the M1A is like a fiery woman you love despite her flaws.

Two weak points in the design become apparent when you try to mount a scope onto an M1A. The most obvious is fitting an optic to the rifle and having it stay solidly locked into place without losing zero. The next is overcoming the

1950s-vintage infantry rifle stock, which was designed with iron sights in mind. Both the U.S. Army and Marine Corps spent considerable time, money and resources trying to address both questions over the years. In hindsight their solutions were not always the best.

Springfield Armory recently introduced a new model for the commercial market that addresses some of the optics-mounting problems. Called the MP9226 Loaded M1A, it comes fitted to an Archangel precision adjustable stock. Manufactured by ProMag Industries, the Archangel is a robust, carbon-fiber-reinforced polymer stock with a number of useful features. The most obvious is it's not wood. While I love the look and feel

of walnut, it's just not the right material for a precision rifle stock. Wood warps, swells, and compresses and will break your heart on the 600-yard line.

Keep in mind, this isn't a Remington Model 700 or Winchester Model 70 we're talking about. Those designs are free-floated and fitted with bottom metal bolted solidly in place. No, this is a gas gun with roots stretching back to the 1920s, and the barreled action is retained in the stock by camming the trigger guard into place. Stock fit is critical on an M1A; it needs to be tight. If there is not enough tension in the right spots, accuracy will suffer. And you need a stiff stock as well—one that won't flex under sling pressure



or when firing off a rest. The Archangel stock provides both a nice tight fit for the receiver lugs and a fairly stiff fore-end.

More importantly, it should prove to be more durable internally than a glass-bedded stock. Repeatedly taking the action out of a traditional glass-bedded M1A wood stock can damage the bedding and hurt accuracy. That's why military and civilian competitive shooters are loath to remove the action from the stock unless absolutely necessary. Because the Archangel is polymer, the all-important bedding area shouldn't wear like a traditional wood stock.

Externally, the Archangel's profile will remind you of a much more expensive J. Allen Enterprises' JAE-100 G3 stock. The Archangel features a nicely contoured pistol grip, adjustable cheek rest, 1913 rail accessory rail and multiple sling mounting points.

The adjustable cheek rest is the most important feature. Optics usually end up very high on an M1A, resulting in a chin weld instead of a proper cheek weld. To remedy this, the Archangel features an easily adjustable cheek rest with more than two inches of travel. A rotating thumbwheel with positive detents is easy to reach yet out of the way on the bottom

of the stock. Once you set the cheek rest height, it will not move accidentally.

The length of pull can be adjusted as well. Turning a thumbwheel will adjust the butt in or out up to 1.25 inches. This allows a rifleman to easily fit the rifle to him or her whether wearing a heavy winter coat or just a T-shirt—as well as using it to fine-tune eye relief. It's capped off with a rubber buttpad that keeps the rifle from sliding around and mitigates recoil.

No rifle is complete without a sling, and the Archangel provides plenty of mounting options. A conventional sling stud is mounted on the butt and fore-end. In addition to these, a QD sling cup is fitted on the left and right side of the butt and on the left and right side of the fore-end. It's also possible to fit a sling mount onto the 1913 rail located at six o'clock. This rail is ideal for mounting a quick detachable bipod.

Springfield Armory drops one of its well-respected M1A actions into the stock. As one of the company's Loaded models, the action is mated to a 22-inch carbon steel National Match barrel. It's a medium-weight barrel with a profile that adds mass beneath the handguards compared to a standard infantry barrel.

Each barrel is air gauged to ensure accuracy and features six-groove rifling with a 1:11 twist. This twist rate makes it suitable for use with a wide range of projectile lengths and weights. A traditional M14 birdcage flash suppressor is fitted to the front of the barrel, and it is reamed to National Match specifications.

Another upgrade on the MP9226 is the trigger. Springfield Armory scrapped the standard trigger mechanism and replaced it with one built to National Match specifications. This is tuned to provide a two-stage pull with a release weight of between 4.5 and five pounds.

Springfield Armory also upgraded the sights on this model. In place of the wide, .084-inch standard infantry front sight is a narrower National Match blade. This measures .062 inch in width and is a bit more precise than the standard unit. The rear sight has also been changed to National Match specifications, minus the hooded rear sight. While the hood is not present, the rear sight aperture is a finer .052 inch. Windage adjustments are 1/2

m.o.a. per click. Elevation adjustments are in one m.o.a. increments per click due to the lack of the rotating hood (it's the hood that provides the 1/2 m.o.a. adjustment increments on the National Match sights).

While the National Match sights are very good, this rifle cries out for an optic. So I had Springfield Armory send me one of its MA5028 Gen 4 steel scope mounts (\$299).

As the Gen 4 name implies, Springfield Armory has refined and improved its scope mounting systems over the decades. The Gen 4 is machined from steel and features multiple locking/contact points. To install, you must first remove the action from the stock and pop off the stripper clip guide. This requires driving out one pin and then tapping the guide out of its dovetail. A mounting block for the scope takes its place, and then the mount can be installed and adjusted. It features a contact point at the front and is bolted into place on the side and rear.

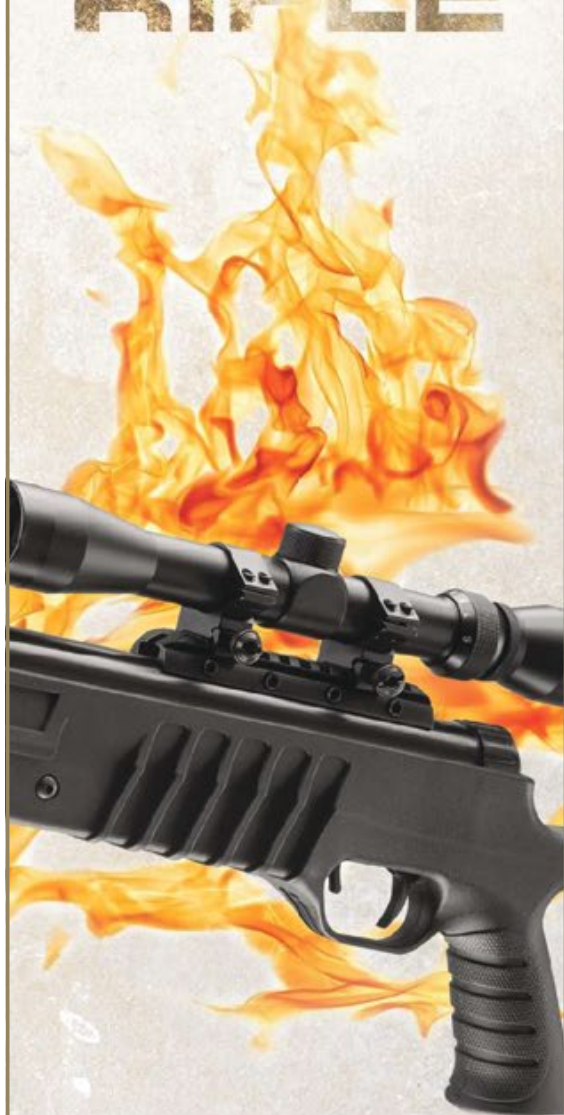
Installing the mount is not hard. However, it needs to be done properly

SPECIFICATIONS

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY MP9226 LOADED M1A

ACTION	rotating bolt via short-stroke gas piston
CALIBER	7.62mm NATO
CAPACITY	feeds from detachable box magazines
BARREL	22 in. air-gauged medium-weight carbon steel National Match; 6-groove, 1:11 twist
OVERALL LENGTH	45–46.25 in.
WEIGHT	11.25 lb.
STOCK	Archangel precision adjustable
FINISH	black phosphate
TRIGGER	two-stage National Match; 4.5 to 5 lb. pull
SIGHTS	.062 in. National Match blade front; .052 in. National Match aperture rear w/o hood
PRICE	\$1,926
MANUFACTURER	Springfield Armory, SPRINGFIELD-ARMORY.COM

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to ensure you can zero your optic. If it's not aligned correctly, you will run into difficulties with windage, elevation or both. So if you find yourself having to dial in excessive amounts of windage or elevation, your mount is not properly aligned. M1A scope mounts have black hearts, and I highly recommend using blue Loctite and properly tightening your fasteners. You can mark the locking screws with a paint marker so you can see if they begin to loosen. Then just check them often.

The MP9226 is intended for optics, and I wanted something with a bit of magnification but not overly long. I found a good match in Hi-Lux Optics 4-20x50mm PentaLux TAC-V. It features a five-fold magnification increase, finger-adjustable turrets with audible and tactile

0.1 mil adjustments and a 30mm tube. Overall length is just 14.5 inches.

The TAC-V models also incorporate a new illuminated etched-glass reticle, with ranging scales and holdover aiming marks in both mils and m.o.a. This allows a rifleman to spot his impact, measure the distance to his aiming point using the reticle and dial correction directly into the scope. I mounted the Hi-Lux in a set of ARMS 30mm QD steel rings.

Zeroing took a bit of time to ensure the mount was properly adjusted. Once this was completed, Springfield's MP9226 Loaded M1A went on to perform very well. To check its performance, I gathered together seven different loads running in bullet weight from 120 to 175 grains. Results are shown in the accompanying chart.



Perhaps the biggest upgrade is the Archangel stock, which permits adjustment of the cheek rest and length of pull via two thumbwheels. Length of pull can be adjusted 1.2 inches while the cheek rest can be raised more than two inches



Springfield's MA5028 Gen 4 optics mount (not included) is machined from steel and has multiple locking and contact points.

One interesting aside regarding the chart. Velocity was measured using a LabRadar unit, which is a Doppler radar unit rather than a conventional chronograph. It was my first time using it. Setup is easy. Turn it on, place it on the bench next to the rifle and aim it at your target. Hit a button and start shooting. No skyscreens, no hole to shoot through, no need for certain lighting conditions. The LabRadar not only measures the bullet's velocity at the muzzle, but also reads it as it travels downrange, and as you shoot, your data are displayed on a large, easy-to-read screen. When you're done, take it home and plug it into your computer, and, presto, it provides the detailed info you're looking for. I like it.

Off the bench, Springfield's MP9226 proved very pleasant and comfortable to shoot, largely due to the adjustable stock. The rifle's bolt operates smoothly, and rounds chambered without issue. Magazines load easily in the standard M1A fashion, snapping into place with a push and roll. The trigger is fairly light, crisp and an aid to accuracy.

Best group of the day was five rounds into 1.0 inch posted with Hornady's 168-grain Open Tip Match. The only load that gave me any problems was American Tactical's 150-grain full metal jacket. This Turkish load was simply not to the M1A's liking and short-stroked frequently.

With bench testing out of the way, I switched to shooting steel from field positions. This is where a semiautomatic rifle like the M1A really shines. Keep in mind this isn't an excessively heavy gun limited to firing from the prone position. Empty weight without optics is only 11.2 pounds, so it can easily be fired offhand or from various field positions. I shot steel out to 710 yards, and the rifle provided rapid hits as I worked my way out. At 710 yards the rifle easily stayed on an Action Target silhouette using Hornady's 168-grain Match load. I had delightful weather conditions for Kansas, and a no-value wind, which provided the rare opportunity to hold center and fire.

If you're not familiar with the platform, I should note here the M1A is more difficult to shoot to its potential than, say, an AR-15. With an AR you can get sloppy regarding proper position and technique

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and get away with it because of its light recoil. The M1A is a different animal. It will gleefully pound a shoddy position apart during a rapid-fire string. You really have to master and apply the fundamentals with an M1A.

Further, you're not going to kick sand

in the face of a tuned bolt gun or AR on paper. Springfield Armory M1A rifles usually shoot well out of the box, but a good 'smith who really knows the design can improve accuracy with some basic modifications. These include ensuring both the stock and handguard fit the bar-

reled action properly and unitizing the gas system. The problem is finding someone who really knows these rifles, and for this I usually turn to Gus Norcross—a former National Guard Marksmanship Training Unit armorer who specializes in the M1A—at Angus Arms.

And there's a lot going on with the scope mounting system. Physically screwing a mount to the side of the receiver isn't difficult, but having it steadfastly retain zero through hard use and abuse is a bit more challenging. If it's solid, you're good. If it starts to move, woe is you.

Having said that, I think Springfield's new MP9226 Loaded is a nicely made traditional .308 with a few twists. The Archangel stock is comfortable and changes the whole look and feel of the rifle. It may not be the most expensive stock in the world, but it does wonders for the M1A. It provides a good, repeatable cheek weld even with an optic jacked to the heavens, and the adjustable length of pull is helpful in fitting the rifle to the shooter.

Practical field accuracy is quite acceptable, it proved a lot of fun shooting steel, and shooting with its refined National Match iron sights is entertaining in its own right. Basically, you're getting a rugged, accurate and reliable rifle with an interesting history and modern upgrades. ■

The rifle features National Match sights, which are finer and allow for more precision adjustments. While the gun is intended for optics use, shooting with these sights is a pleasure.



The stock's stiff fore-end resists flexing in tight-sling or rested positions, and it also features a rail section for mounting a bipod.



ACCURACY RESULTS

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY MP9226 LOADED M1A

.308 WIN.	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
HORNADY OTM	168	2,596	15	1.20
FEDERAL GOLD MEDAL	175	2,609	12	1.40
BLACK HILLS OTM	175	2,639	11	1.60
HORNADY A-MAX	155	2,808	33	1.70
FEDERAL BT	150	2,808	13	1.95
AMERICAN TACTICAL FMJ	150	2,789	24	2.40
WINCHESTER PDX1	120	3,085	20	2.70

NOTES: Accuracy results are averages of four five-shot groups fired from a rest at 100 yards. Velocity readings measured at the muzzle at an ambient temperature of 75 degrees 1,030 feet above sea level with a LabRadar Doppler radar unit. Abbreviations: BT, boattail; FMJ, full metal jacket; OTM, open tip match



The MP9226 proved to be acceptably accurate from the bench and great for shooting from field positions because of a good trigger and a stock that permits a proper cheek weld when using a scope.

GUNS&AMMO

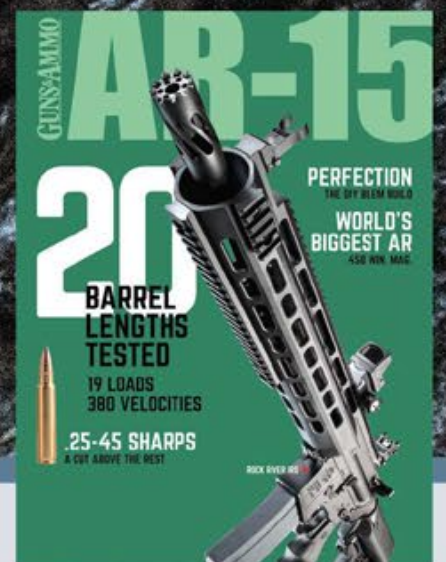
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RIFLE REPORT

by
Stan Trzoniec



Winchester XPR

A lot of water has gone under the bridge when it comes to Winchester firearms. After a period of uncertainty following the closure of its New Haven plant, its flagship Model 70 has been built back up to several models and more than 100 variations. And now the company is entering the budget-rifle race with the new XPR.

As befits a Winchester, it's chambered for .270 Win., .30-06 and the .300 and .338 Win. Mags. The rifle is made in Portugal by Browning Viana, and it's quite a departure from Winchester's customary line of rifles.

For starters, the stock is black polymer with plenty of textured or stippled coverage on both the fore-end and the pistol grip, the latter sporting a small white emblem encircling a red "W" near the base and a black "W" impressed on the underside. The fore-

end is flattened out to provide a steady platform for shooting in the field.

It's a classic straight-comb stock capped off with Winchester's Inflex pad designed to divert felt recoil down and away from the face—a good idea since this lightweight seven-pound gun is chambered in two potent magnums.

The "bottom metal" consists of a one-piece polymer trigger guard with a lot of room for gloves and a polymer magazine well. The detachable magazine is a polymer single stack that holds three rounds and securely locks both on the front and back. The magazine is very light and loads easily, and because the magazine is so light, carrying extras in the field will be a snap.

Inside the stock, you'll find molded-in "flat profile interface pads" to prevent the stock from twisting and flexing; according to Winchester, the design promises to "hold its zero under the most adverse conditions."

SPECIFICATIONS

WINCHESTER XPR

TYPE	bolt-action centerfire
CALIBER	.270 Win. (tested), .30-06, .300 Win. Mag., .338 Win. Mag.
CAPACITY	3+1, detachable box magazine
BARREL	24 (tested), 26 in.; 1:10 twist
OVERALL LENGTH	44.5 in. (as tested)
WEIGHT	7.0 to 7.25 lb.
STOCK	black (tested), camo polymer
FINISH	matte blue
TRIGGER	M.O.A. adjustable
SIGHTS	none; bases supplied
PRICE	\$549
MANUFACTURER	Browning; Viana, Portugal
DISTRIBUTOR	Winchester, WINCHESTERGUNS.COM

The action is free-floated within the stock and features a large and long bolt that measures eight inches from bolt face to shroud and a hefty .890 inch in

diameter. The head has three locking lugs for a 60-degree bolt lift for additional scope clearance. Except for the hollowed-out bolt knob, bolt handle and shroud, the entire bolt body has been coated with nickel Teflon for ease of operation and corrosion resistance. At the bolt face, you will find the traditional blade type extractor and plunger ejector.

The receiver is machined from chromoly steel bar stock then heat-treated. It features a large ejection port sufficient for standard and magnum cartridges. The receiver is drilled and tapped for 8-40 scope-mounting screws, and a two-piece set of slot ring bases are included with gun—a nice touch. There is no traditional recoil lug as the action sits on the interface pads. The chromoly barrel is button rifled and sports a recessed target crown. A smooth barrel nut ensures proper headspace during installation and aids accuracy.

Unlike the Model 70's three-position wing safety, the XPR has a two-position sliding safety many shooters like: forward to Fire, back for Safe. Forward of the safety is a bolt unlock button that allows the bolt to operate with the safety on for loading and unloading the rifle. The bolt release is a lever on the left rear of the receiver.

Winchester included its M.O.A. adjustable trigger in the XPR. With a mechanical advantage of 2:1, the trigger piece travels only half the distance as the actuator—giving a lighter, more sensitive feel to the trigger pull. There is zero take-up, zero creep and zero overtravel. It is also user-adjustable. Out of the box my sample registered a bit over four pounds, which falls in line with the factory specs of 3.5 pounds, and was nicely crisp.

For testing, I mounted a Bushnell Banner 3-9x40mm Wide Angle scope in Leupold detachable rings on the supplied Winchester bases. The rifle shot about how I expected it to in terms of accuracy; all groups averaged less than two inches. The synthetic stock held its own, but as we all know, you do get more of a recoil sensation than when shooting with a wooden

stock. The innovative recoil pad on this gun is a big help with apparent recoil, more so on the standard loadings, less on hot ammunition like Hornady's old Light Magnum.

In any event, I was pleased with the outcome, and after the range tests, I stayed longer to shoot some hand-

loads and get to know the gun better using the trigger and bolt operation. Not once did I have any problems with feeding or ejection, and overall the gun was a joy to use. At a suggested retail of \$549, you're likely to find it selling for closer to \$500 at some retailers. I think it's well worth the money. ■



The rifle incorporates a Teflon-coated fat bolt with a 60-degree throw as well as a smooth barrel nut. The gun is not only drilled and tapped, it ships with scope mounting bases.



The XPR uses a three-round, single-stack polymer magazine. They're nice and light, which makes carrying spares a snap. The mags lock securely and easily into place.



The XPR employs a sliding two-position safety, and it has a bolt unlock button that permits the bolt to be cycled with the rifle on Safe.

ACCURACY RESULTS

WINCHESTER XPR

.270 Win.	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
HORNADY LIGHT MAGNUM BOATTAIL SOFTPOINT	140	3031	17	1.50
HORNADY INTERLOCK SPIRE POINT	130	2901	13	1.75
REMINGTON CORE-LOKT SOFTPOINT	150	2853	8	1.75

Notes: Accuracy results are averages of three three-shot groups at 100 yards from a sandbag rest. Velocities are five-shot averages recorded on an Oehler Model 35P chronograph.

RIFLE REPORT

by
Joseph von Benedikt



CZ 455 Ultra Lux

A refined iteration of CZ's 455 bolt-action rimfire, the Ultra Lux is notable for its extra-long 28.62-inch barrel and a European-style stock, both of which are optimized for iron-sight shooting. It's longer and heavier than many .22 rimfire rifles, but the length and weight give it a seldom-equalled balance and stability while shooting.

The Ultra Lux is a repeating bolt-action design fed from a detachable magazine. The magazines themselves are polymer-sided with metal guts and are available in both five- and 10-round versions; it ships with a 10-rounder. A small, tasteful latch at the forward end secures the magazine into the magazine well; the latch is machined through the stamped (but gracefully curved) trigger guard.

The Ultra Lux sports an adjustable single-stage trigger, which I prefer over a single-set trigger. From the factory, mine is adjusted to a crisp two pounds, 12 ounces. Pressing the trigger while drawing the bolt rearward allows it to

be removed from the action.

The bolt is a controlled-feed design featuring dual extractors at three and nine o'clock that grasp the rim of the cartridge as it feeds up from the magazine, and the bolt handle serves double-duty as the locking lug. The ejector is a fixed affair immediately at the rear of the magazine, and it boosts empty cartridge cases out with finesse or with gusto, depending on how aggressively you work the bolt.

The safety is a wing type atop the bolt shroud, and unlike most American designs, Safe is forward and Fire is rearward. It takes a little getting used to but is positive and solid. When engaged, it locks the bolt in the closed position.

The beechwood stock sports a European-style cheekpiece, nice non-detachable sling swivels fore and aft, and a thin rubber butt pad. Decent checkering aids a sure grip. The wood is finished with a nice non-glare satin that shows off the beechwood's high-contrast grain.

The barrel is fully free-floated in the

SPECIFICATIONS

CZ-USA 455 ULTRA LUX

TYPE	bolt-action rimfire
CALIBER	.22 Long Rifle
CAPACITY	10
BARREL	28.62 in., 1:16 twist
OVERALL LENGTH	46.42 in.
WEIGHT	6 lb., 13 oz.
STOCK	beech, European style with cheekpiece
FINISH	blue
TRIGGER	single-stage; 2 lb., 12 oz. (as tested)
SAFETY	two-position wing
SIGHTS	hooded blade front, adjustable tangent rear
PRICE	\$449
MANUFACTURER	CZ-USA, cz-usa.com

fore-end. The front sight is an interchangeable blade mounted in a ramp with a vented hood; the rear is a tangent type adjustable for 200 yards of elevation and for windage via side screws. The sights were smack on with 40-grain bullets.

My first impression of the Ultra Lux was that it's long. My second, as I hefted it in Gunnies Sporting Goods in Orem,

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Utah, was amazement at how well it balanced and how steady it hung in the offhand position. I spent a lot of time in my youth competing with muzzleloading long rifles, shooting offhand, and I've never found a practice rifle that could come close to matching the way those muzzleloaders held—until now.

The sights, while nice, made it hard to mount a scope for accuracy testing. The rear assembly sits high enough that it interferes with the objective bell on most of today's scopes, but I found an old, long-tubed optic that fit. Unfortunately, the old scope wouldn't focus well, which resulted in blurry targets, but the rifle still produced sub-inch 50-yard groups. Results can be found in the accompanying chart, and as you can see, it's certainly a minute-of-cottontail rifle, and I can only imagine what it might do with a good, clear, high-magnification, parallax-adjustable scope.

To find out if the Ultra Lux might serve as an entry-level smallbore competition rifle, I fired a pair of 10-round groups from prone at 50 feet with two different match loads: CCI Select and Federal Gold Medal. Both produced gratifyingly tiny single-hole groups. In fact, the Federal load grouped nine of the ten into 0.092 inch—and the single shot out was surely my error. CCI's load was no slouch, either, producing an honest 10-shot group of 0.28 inch at 50 feet. It's interesting to note the two reversed at 50 yards, where the CCI load bettered the Federal.

Later, with the iron sights, I shot several boxes of ammo at various distances out to 200 yards and was immensely pleased with how well the iron sights tracked with 40-grain bullets and how naturally the rifle handled. And while most people don't place much importance on reliability with a rimfire, I'm happy to report the Ultra Lux functioned smoothly and flawlessly.

At almost seven pounds, the 455 Ultra Lux isn't a kid's starter rifle. It's just too long and too heavy. However, it's superb if you've got a teen interested in polishing the finer points of shooting technique. Excellent sights make developing iron-sight skills easy, the weight of the rifle makes holding steady

more achievable, and the clean trigger is far easier to master than the heavy, gritty, creepy trigger common in today's rimfire starter rifles.

And for any shooter who appreciates nicely finished wood and blued metal and yearns for a traditional .22 that is both inherently accurate and superbly easy to shoot well, I can't think of anything better than CZ's 455 Ultra Lux. ■



An excellent tangent rear sight is adjustable for windage via side screws and regulates well with 40-grain bullets all the way to 200 yards.



Like most rimfire bolt actions, the Model 455's bolt handle also serves as the locking lug. The safety seems backward to most Americans: forward is Safe, rearward is Fire.



The Ultra Lux's beechwood stock has European styling and a very European cheekpiece. The beechwood exhibited nicely contrasting grain under a satin finish.

ACCURACY RESULTS				
CZ-USA 455 ULTRA LUX				
.22 Long Rifle	Bullet Weight (gr.)	Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Standard Deviation	Avg. Group (in.)
CCI SELECT PRECISION	40	1,121	18	0.56
WINCHESTER SUPER X	40	1,269	23	0.59
REMINGTON HIGH VELOCITY	40	1,232	20	0.81
FEDERAL GOLD MEDAL	40	1,053	10	0.94
CCI STINGER	32	1,595	15	0.96
Notes: Accuracy figures are the average of five consecutive five-shot groups fired from a bench at 50 yards, without allowing the barrel to cool. Velocities are averages of 25 rounds measured at 10 feet with a Shooting Chrony chronograph.				

THE LAST WORD

Continued from page 80

on feeding and functioning, which we either take as a given or we simply don't worry about it. We should worry about it more, because sometimes, no matter how good we are, we must take a second or third shot, and reliable feeding is a must. A lot of our gun makers, including some good ones, make wonderfully accurate rifles in dramatically fast cartridges, but reliable feeding, extraction and ejection are secondary to them. I see this on more than the occasional production rifle, but I also see it with disturbing frequency on costly semi-custom and custom rifles.

This trend has been exacerbated by the short, fat cartridges. They tend to be accurate and for sure are efficient—developing awesome energy yields per grain of propellant burned and strut their stuff nicely in shorter barrels. They make into light, handy packages that are a joy to carry. However, most actions were simply not designed to feed with cartridges shaped like fireplugs.

I had a lovely .270 WSM I hunted with quite a bit, light and accurate—and it was even left-handed. It fed most of the time, but occasionally, the second cartridge hung up. The day it stuttered on a wolf was the day I gave up on it. Mind you, this is not a total indictment. I have a left-handed Model 70 .270 WSM that feeds just fine. Kimber has an action sized for these cartridges, and I've never seen issues with it. The reality, however, is that feeding problems are more common with the short, fat magnums than with any other group of cartridges I can think of.

If they work, they work, and if they don't, some touch-up on the rails or follower might help. But have you done enough shooting running through full magazines to be sure? All too many of us do our "practice" single loading on the bench. This tells us what we must know about accuracy and proper zero, as well as extraction, ejection and cartridge fit. It tells us nothing about feeding. And while very few of us are ever in life-or-death situations with a rifle, it seems to me feeding and functioning "almost every time" isn't quite good enough. ■

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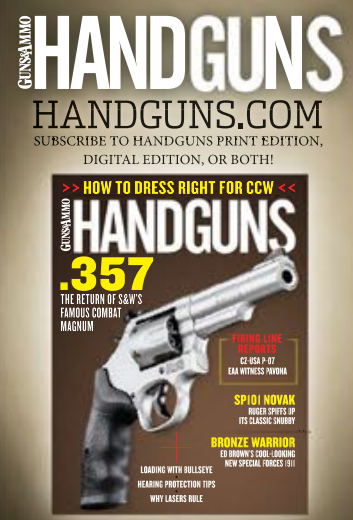


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Feeding Frenzy

The litany is there for all to read and heed and can be found in many places.

But how many of us really run each cartridge through the chamber and into the magazine before going afield? In other contexts, how many operators or law enforcement personnel actually check each magazine and inspect each cartridge?

Recently, my friend Ian Gibson, a great Zimbabwe professional hunter with vast experience, was killed by an elephant. Ian and his tracker, Robert, had been tracking a bull, and the spoor told them it was in musth, the rutting condition that makes the normally placid males temporarily psychopathic. So, using caution, they went forward to see if a close approach was worth the effort and risk.

They were in relatively open ground, and at nearly 100 yards they saw it was a young bull. Then the wind shifted, and the animal instantly whirled and charged. They shouted, and Ian waved his rifle the whole time, trying to make the animal turn—all the time believing it would. At the last, with no choice, Ian took the frontal brain shot, but up close the upward angle makes an always-tricky shot even more difficult. His shot failed to stop the bull, and his .458 jammed. Being unarmed, Robert could do nothing as he watched the elephant kneel on his boss and friend and then tear him to pieces.

This was not necessarily a matter of carelessness or lack of preparation. The same rifle had jammed some months earlier during a leopard charge, but that time he wasn't alone and a good shot from the side prevented a mauling. So he knew feeding could be an issue, but

rifles are hard to come in today's Zimbabwe, and he hadn't been able to replace it. This time, Murphy's Law was applied in spades—a horrible tragedy but a grim reminder.

I think all too often we take proper functioning of our rifles as a given, but any device can fail. So do we function check as often as we should? I've seen a lot of new rifles, including some good

obviously enough to cause a problem. I don't know how it happened, although the box had been on a hunt in Cameroon years earlier, so anything is possible. Regardless, there it was nestled among good cartridges. Considering its purpose as a 300-grain solid, it was a potential disaster waiting to happen.

A problem uncovered at the range isn't really a problem; it's a challenge

I THINK ALL TOO OFTEN WE TAKE PROPER FUNCTIONING OF OUR RIFLES AS A GIVEN, BUT ANY DEVICE CAN FAIL.

ones, that needed work on the rails, follower or magazine spring to improve feeding. I've also had trusty, reliable older rifles suddenly develop problems, usually through worn ejectors or suddenly faulty extractors.

Years ago, I picked up a lovely original .318 Westley Richards in a trade. The late Jack Lott and I took it to the range. It shot fine but wouldn't eject. Jack rummaged around in his range box and, to my youthful amazement, found a new Mauser blade ejector. Presto! The rifle worked like a charm.

More frequently, ammunition is a culprit. We really should check all of our cartridges before heading to the field (whatever the "field" means to each of us). I was at the range the other day, doing some shooting with Mossberg's new .375 Ruger. In a few weeks I'd be taking the rifle on a polar bear hunt—a hunt I'd long dreamed of—and I wanted to spend as much time with it as I could.

I had a couple of boxes of older solids, clearly not the load I'd be hunting with, and I was just shooting them up when I ran into a cartridge that simply would not chamber. Close inspection showed the neck was slightly dented,

averted through discovery. It's a different deal in the field. Just a few years ago I was up on a tall hill, slipping slowly through cover. I saw some deer moving ahead, so I chambered a round in my .300 H&H. The shot didn't happen, but something else did. When I opened the bolt to clear the chamber, the bullet stuck in the lands and only the case came out.

A magazine box full of IMR 4831 is a mess, but that was only the half of it. Do you always carry a cleaning rod? I certainly don't. I cast around and found a long, straight sapling that, just maybe, wouldn't break off in the barrel and make things worse. It didn't, and I got the bullet out. Yes, they were handloads, seated just off the lands. They were accurate, but I obviously hadn't checked them all, and clearly I hadn't checked this one. It was seated a few thousandths too long, and that was enough.

We American rifle shooters tend to have several fixations. One is velocity, which we crave. Another is accuracy. In both cases we demand more than we really need. We are not nearly as fixated

Continued on page 79

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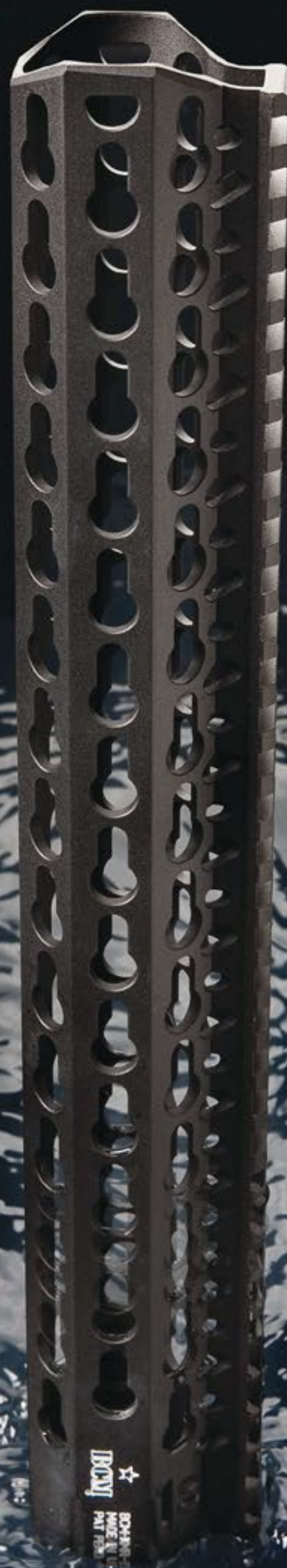
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